



2003 ACOEM Labor Day CheckList

Control of Infectious Diseases

This year, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine's (ACOEM's) annual Labor Day CheckList deals with the control of infectious diseases. Every year, millions of Americans contract infectious diseases that can result in staggering health care costs, reduced workplace productivity, and adverse or even fatal outcomes. At a time when new infections such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) have appeared, it is important to remember that thousands of life-threatening infectious illness per year can be prevented with adherence in the home and workplace to relatively simple principles of infection control. The 2003 CheckList summarizes several steps you can take to reduce the chances that you, a family member, or a colleague will unnecessarily contract an infectious illness.

Action Areas	Employers	Employees
<i>GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INFECTION CONTROL</i>		
<p>Education</p> <p><i>Employers and employees alike should learn the basic principles of infection control.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hold educational programs to teach employees basic principles of infection control including handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, properly handling/preparing food, receiving appropriate immunizations, and preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have any symptoms of respiratory or diarrheal illnesses evaluated by a physician, and practice proper infection control to avoid exposing others. <input type="checkbox"/> Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. <input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands frequently and properly. <input type="checkbox"/> Use proper methods of food handling. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain cleanliness of kitchen and bathroom surfaces. <input type="checkbox"/> If you think you have an acute infectious illness, see your physician. If your doctor determines that you have such a condition and recommends that you remain home from work, do so – don't share infections with your co-workers.
<i>INFECTION CONTROL TECHNIQUES</i>		
<p>Handwashing</p> <p><i>Reminders and common sense can help reduce the chance of spreading infectious diseases.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Display signs that encouraging hand-washing prior to and after eating, preparing food, using the restroom, or whenever hands become soiled. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide adequate facilities for hand-washing. Consider alcohol-based hand sanitizers as an alternative to soap and water as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands properly with a 15-second vigorous scrubbing, followed by rinsing and drying. <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a reasonable alternative to soap and water if hands are not visibly dirty. <input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands prior to and after eating, preparing food, using the restroom, or whenever hands become soiled. <input type="checkbox"/> If a family member or co-worker is sick, wash hands after contact with that individual. When a family member is sick, wash hands before leaving for work. Conversely, when a co-worker is sick, wash hands before leaving for home.

<p>Cleaning and Disinfecting</p> <p><i>Regular cleaning and disinfection of kitchen and bathroom areas is essential.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be certain that food preparation areas, serving areas, and restrooms in the workplace receive thorough regularly scheduled cleaning with soap and water. <input type="checkbox"/> When disinfectants are used, be sure to follow manufacturers' instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Report soiled surfaces, particularly in food preparation/serving areas and restrooms, to those responsible for building maintenance in the workplace.
<p>Food Handling and Preparation</p> <p><i>Remember to store foods at correct temperatures and cook foods to their proper internal temperature.</i></p> <p><i>Always clean and disinfect areas where foods are kept and prepared.</i></p> <p><i>Proper techniques for defrosting, cleaning, and cooking foods will prevent spoilage and contamination.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If food is stored in the workplace, maintain refrigerators at 40° Fahrenheit and freezers at 0° Fahrenheit. <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerators and freezers should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. <input type="checkbox"/> Foods should be stored in separate containers to prevent contamination of other foods. <input type="checkbox"/> If food is prepared and served in the workplace, regularly monitor to ensure that practices conform to applicable health department standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands and clean/disinfect kitchen surfaces before and after handling, cooking, and serving food. <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerate eggs, raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Defrost food on a plate in refrigerator or microwave oven – not on the counter. Cook food immediately after defrosting. <input type="checkbox"/> Use different dishes and utensils for raw versus cooked foods. <input type="checkbox"/> Wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating. <input type="checkbox"/> Cook eggs until firm; poultry to an internal temperature of 180° Fahrenheit; and hamburger meat until brown on the inside.
<p><i>LIFESTYLE</i></p>		
<p>Vaccinations</p> <p><i>Hepatitis B vaccine is an appropriate pre-caution for employees who may be exposed to blood or body fluids at work.</i></p> <p><i>Annual flu vaccination should be considered for those who fall into high-risk categories.</i></p> <p><i>Parents should have children vaccinated according to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and their pediatrician.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide hepatitis B vaccine free of charge to employees who may be exposed to blood or body fluids at work in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) law. Complete hepatitis B surface antibody testing one month following the vaccination series to document response. Periodic retesting of antibody levels is not necessary for those who respond to the vaccine. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider making influenza vaccine available annually in the workplace during October-November-December. Groups targeted for vaccination include adults older than 50, adults with chronic medical conditions – especially heart or lung conditions including asthma, women who may be more than 3 months pregnant during the flu season, and health care workers. <input type="checkbox"/> Make educational materials regarding childhood vaccination available to employees with young children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check with your physician to confirm that you have received all recommended vaccinations. <input type="checkbox"/> Get vaccinated against influenza every autumn if you belong to a group for which flu vaccine is recommended. <input type="checkbox"/> If you have children, be certain that they receive vaccinations in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (www.cdc.gov/nip/acip).

Some of this information was abstracted from materials compiled by the National Center for Infectious Diseases, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.