



May 29, 2009

The UFT Safety and Health Department has received a number of calls and emails regarding disinfecting a school building in response to the flu virus. The flu virus is primarily transmitted from person to person contact and mainly through inhalation of the droplets from coughing and sneezing by infected persons. Shaking hands or other types of direct contact may also transfer the virus. There is no evidence that enhanced disinfection of school buildings is beneficial.

There are studies indicating that the flu virus does not survive on surfaces very well. On porous materials the virus does not survive for more than a few hours. On hard non-porous surfaces it may survive for 1 day. However infection from a surface to a person is not a principal route of transmission.

The UFT has encouraged the DOE to step up cleaning in schools with flu but there is no mandatory cleaning protocol for schools with H1N1 cases. Common-sense measures are recommended. These include regularly cleaning and disinfecting bathrooms, cafeterias and doorknobs in common areas, making sure that all bathrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels, and opening windows to ensure the building is properly ventilated. It is more important to wash hands, cover the mouth when sneezing or coughing and keep many windows open.

Please refer to the [DOH/DOE factsheet](#) which outlines these cleaning protocols.

[DOH/DOE H1N1 FAQ for parents, teachers, and school principals](#)

What cleaning measures are needed in a school where children or staff members are ill?

No specialized cleaning or disinfection is required, but custodial engineers and building managers should attend to good maintenance practices such as:

Regularly cleaning and disinfecting bathrooms, cafeterias and doorknobs in common areas

Ensuring that all bathrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels

Opening windows to ensure that the building is properly ventilated