

September 26, 2008

**For Immediate Release**

**Handwashing: the Single Most Effective Way to Prevent the Transmission of Disease**

Beginning today, September 26, 2008, all Ontario public hospitals began to publicly report their rates of new *C. difficile* cases.

These reports are a good reminder of the importance of a very simple, basic technique we can all take to prevent infection: handwashing. *C. difficile* is one of the most common infections found in hospitals and long-term care facilities. People can become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with *C. difficile*, and then touch their mouth or nose. Health care workers and visitors can spread the bacteria to other patients or contaminate surfaces through hand contact. Handwashing is a proven method to stop this spread.

Elaborate anti-bacterial scrubs are not required! Washing your hands in warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds is an effective way to remove the bacteria. The steps of good handwashing technique are:

- Wet hands with warm water
- Lather for 15 seconds, rubbing vigorously on fronts and backs of hands, and between fingers
- Rinse with warm water
- Dry hands with paper towel
- Use the paper towel to turn the taps off.

If you work in a hospital or a long-term health care facility, or visit someone there, wash your hands often, especially after using the toilet. Also, most health care facilities now provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at the entrance. Be sure to use it.

Handwashing is the single most effective way to prevent the transmission of disease. With influenza season about to begin, all members of the public are reminded of the importance of hand hygiene in reducing the spread of infection at home, at school, and at work.

For further information, contact Wanda Tonus at 743-1000, extension 285

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