

Acute Respiratory Infections Prevention and Control Guidelines in Universities

Preface:

Acute respiratory infections such as influenza, the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), which appeared in the Arabian Peninsula in 2012, and the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which appeared in the Republic of China in 2019. All respiratory infections share similar transmission and prevention methods and procedures. The following preventive measures contribute to minimize the risk of transmission of infection (spread).

The Target Population for this Guide:

Schools and universities and educational institutes represent ideal environment for the spread of respiratory infections due to crowdedness and unhygienic conditions. This guide targets directors, workers and students. Some universities are characterized by having their own hospitals and treatment centers, as well as health personnel among their staff and faculty.

The Recommended Preventive Measures to be followed in Educational Facilities:

1- **Raise awareness and disseminate information among all workers and students about the nature of the disease, its transmission modes and the prevention measures that individuals should be followed.**

The University health counselor or the educational department in the university hospital or in the colleges of medicine shall be assigned to carry out health education and awareness for students, workers, and faculty by doing the following:

- Create Communication Plans for use within the university community. Send educational messages and share information internally with students, staff and faculty relying mainly on official and credible sources of information (Ministry of Health and the Saudi Center for Disease Prevention and Control)*.
- Allocate some lectures and scientific seminars to share scientific content suitable for the recipients on respiratory infections, how to prevent spreading, and proper practices for personal care and hygiene.
- Disseminate awareness and educational material, such as posters, leaflets, brochures, etc. in gathering areas in universities and their official websites to urge students, staff and faculty to wash their hands and follow the etiquette of coughing and sneezing.
- Raise awareness among university students and staff about the preventive measures against respiratory diseases, in theory and in practice and urging them to follow the outlined measures.
- Keep the community informed with accurate information in an effort to prevent the spread of misinformation, using the help of affiliated doctors and scientists, and aforementioned credible sources of information.
- Educate health personnel in the affiliated health facilities of the universities about the reporting mechanisms and how to deal with the patients having respiratory symptoms.
- Spread the culture of proper use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers during working hours among students and staff.
- Raise the awareness about the importance of the seasonal flu vaccine for students and university staff.
- Raise awareness about the importance of urgently visiting the doctor in case of respiratory symptoms appearance (fever, cough, or shortness of breath).

- 2- Provide adequate supply of hand sanitizers and soap in all universities:**
 - Ensure the availability of hand soap in universities' bathrooms.
 - Ensure the availability and proper use of sanitizers as per the directions on the label of the product.
- 3- Strict commitment to routinely clean frequently touched surfaces with disinfectants approved by the Ministry of Health, such as Quaternary Ammonium compounds.**
 - Ensure the cleanliness of public places and bathrooms used by students and staff, with a focus on the frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles / knobs, dining tables, seat rests, and elevator buttons, etc. on a routine basis.
- 4- Good ventilation for universities:**
 - Ensure that the classrooms and gathering places are well ventilated with good air flow; natural ventilation is preferred.
- 5- Health personnel keeping abreast with respiratory disease updates:**
 - Health and infection control personnel, and public health officials in the health facilities should stay abreast with the updates in guidelines pertaining to infectious diseases, disseminating the updated information to the health personnel, and ensure accurate reporting of any infectious disease according to policies outlined in the regulation for infectious disease reporting.
- 6- Treatment procedures for students and monitoring the exposed individuals:**
 - In the event that a student is transferred to the health facility affiliated with the university, or an outpatient case is discovered, the university should coordinate between the health facilities and public health departments in the regions as per the following:
 - Update the patient's condition on the electronic reporting system (HESN).
 - Contribute to the identification of individuals who had a direct or close contact with confirmed case of respiratory infection and provide the name list to the public health department.
 - Ensure that the infected student does not attend the university until he/she is fully recovered. If the case is confirmed to be a Corona virus infection (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome or Coronavirus Disease-2019), he / she must not be permitted to return until examined and provided with a medical report stating that the student is clear, and is safe to return to the university.

***Attached to you is a ready-to-print educational message design link**

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