



*California Dental Hygienists' Association*  
*The Voice of Dental Hygiene*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **California Dental Hygienists' Association Offers H1N1 Flu Prevention Tips for Patients & Oral Health Professionals**

***Old Toothbrushes Can Be Breeding Ground for Disease,  
Proper Oral Health Practices Can Help Limit Exposure to Swine Flu***

**GLENDALE, Calif. (Oct. 6, 2009)** – In keeping with the global effort to limit the spread of the Swine Flu, the [California Dental Hygienists' Association](#) (CDHA) issued a list today of simple ways patients and oral health professionals can prevent catching and spreading the disease.

“It’s critical that the public sees the link between oral health and flu prevention because the H1N1 virus spreads through the respiratory system and mouth,” said CDHA president, Daphne Von Essen. “The primary infection control goal is to prevent transmission of disease – that begins with the mouth.”

Most people may not realize how important it is to avoid sharing toothbrushes or allowing them to have contact with one another in the bathroom, she said.

“This is especially true if a family member contracts the flu,” said Von Essen. “We recommend people throw out their old toothbrushes and get new ones if they are either sick or getting over the flu.”

A second important reminder is to observe proper [respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette](#). The [Centers for Disease Control](#) is recommending people cough directly into a tissue, shirtsleeve or elbow rather than by covering their mouths with their hands. Always wash hands afterwards and frequently throughout the day.

For dental hygienists, assistants and dentists, the CDHA recommends the following infection control measures during patient assessment:

- Patients with an acute respiratory illness should be sent home or placed in a single-patient room with the door kept closed.

- Offer a disposable surgical mask to persons who are coughing or provide tissues and a no-touch receptacle for disposal of used tissues.
- The ill person should wear a surgical mask when outside of the patient room.
- Dental Healthcare Personnel assessing a patient with influenza like illness should wear disposable [surgical facemask](#), non-sterile gloves, gown, and eye protection (e.g., goggles) to prevent direct skin and conjunctival exposure.
- Check the following web site on a regular basis as recommendations may change as additional information becomes available:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines\\_infection\\_control.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines_infection_control.htm)
- Patient and dental healthcare workers should perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic hand wash) before and after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.
- Routine cleaning and disinfection strategies used during influenza seasons can be applied to the environmental management of swine influenza. More information can be found at  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl\\_environinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl_environinfection.html).

“This is a serious flu but with proper steps and education, dental healthcare professionals and their patients can help prevent the spread of H1N1,” said Von Essen.

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*The California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) is the authoritative voice of the state's dental hygiene profession. The organization was established 20 years ago when two regional associations merged to form a unified professional group. CDHA represents thousands of dental hygienists throughout the state and is dedicated to expanding opportunities for the profession and access to care for all Californians. For more information, visit [www.cdha.org](http://www.cdha.org)*