

INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL COVID-19 COMMITTEE

Bulletin #143b – COVID-19 – ID-IPC – Variants of Concern Fomite Transmission – May 17 2021

Transmission of COVID-19 B.1.617 (Indian variant of concern)

A large body of foundational research has shown that droplet and contact transmission are the principal modes of transmission for the vast majority of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19.

Public Health experience during the recent COVID-19 B.1.617 (Indian variant of concern) outbreaks at UNB Magee House residence and the Delta Hotel in Fredericton, has highlighted a very strong probability of contact / fomite transmission.

Fomites are inanimate objects such as telephones, doorknobs, keyboards, counter tops, handrails and dictaphones etc. These objects may become contaminated in two ways: either through respiratory droplets expelled by infected individuals which contaminate surfaces or via cross-contamination from hands.

When contaminated, these objects serve as vehicles in the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The spread of infection occurs when we touch these objects / surfaces and then inadvertently touch our mouth, nose, or eyes.

Hand hygiene and environmental cleaning and disinfection are the most effective means to prevent this mode of transmission.

Hands must be cleaned at minimum:

- Before contact with patients or patient area
- After contact with patients or patient area
- Before aseptic procedures
- After contact with body fluids **and**
- Following contact with shared items and surfaces such as keyboards, computer mouse, phones, dictaphones and handrails etc.

Increased environmental cleaning and disinfection of shared items and surfaces is also a key step in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within our healthcare facilities.

As health care workers we all play a role in preventing the transmission of infection. If you use a shared item or are working at a communal workspace, please use the hospital provided cleaner / disinfectant wipes to clean and disinfect the item/area before and after usage. Then clean your hands.