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NEXT GENERATION INFECTION PREVENTION SOLUTIONS

Proactive Precautions Against Monkeypox Infections

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Along with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the world is seeing the rapid emergence of another significant viral infection. In May 2022, the World Health Organization recognized the monkeypox virus was spreading throughout Europe and North America and two months later, the U.S. declared monkeypox a public health emergency. This emerging disease presents a challenge not only to healthcare providers but, also to the community at large as we look to contain it and prevent the outbreak from worsening. This document will provide a brief overview of the disease and what proactive precautions can be taken to reduce the risk of infection.

▲ Monkeypox Explained

Monkeypox is a large-enveloped DNA virus of the Variola genus, which is the same viral family that causes smallpox. Fortunately, the clade presently circulating in the U.S. is rarely fatal and most infected individuals experience relatively mild symptoms. Nonetheless, monkeypox is quite painful and is moderately contagious. If infected, the CDC recommends isolating at home, which can be difficult with a disease that lasts up to four weeks. The smallpox vaccine has existed for years and is effective against monkeypox however, supplies are currently very limited.

Monkeypox is transmitted person to person through prolonged close physical contact. However, the virus is also spread by contaminated surfaces (fomites) when skin lesions from an infected individual are shed in the environment where they may remain viable for several days and spread to others. The monkeypox virus also has a particular ability to survive in clothing and bedding.

▲ Preventative Measures

For monkeypox, breaking the chain of transmission requires a multi-faceted approach that should include vaccination, isolation if infected, hand hygiene, and extensive cleaning and disinfection of spaces occupied by infected individuals. The surface cleaning and disinfection component of prevention must be completed using a disinfectant that is EPA registered as effective against the organism of concern.

Monkeypox is a relatively new virus in the U.S. so, at present, there are no disinfectants with a specific efficacy claim. Consequently, the EPA activated the emerging viral pathogen claim and created List Q to identify those products that can be considered effective against monkeypox. As a large-enveloped virus, monkeypox is relatively easy to kill with disinfectants, such as EvaClean's PurOne and PurTabs, both of which are safer to use and don't require a precleaning step.

In spaces a known infected individual has inhabited, it is wise to increase the frequency of cleaning from daily to twice or even three times a day, and to ensure all

7 Steps to Protect

Through a well-planned cleaning and disinfection program, we can help reduce the risk of infection from this emerging viral pathogen. Here are seven key precautions that should be taken to prevent monkeypox viral infections:

1. Select cleaning and disinfecting products that are on **EPA List Q for monkeypox**
2. Select cleaning and disinfecting products that are a **single application with no precleaning**
3. Select disinfectant products that are **EPA registered for use with Electrostatic Sprayers**
4. Increase the frequency of **cleaning and disinfection to 2-3 times per day**
5. Provide staff with **appropriate PPE and adequate training** on its correct use
6. Ensure **laundry is handled properly**, use disinfectant in the cleaning cycle
7. **Always be proactively prepared** as infected individuals can be anywhere

high-touch surfaces are addressed in the disinfection process, including floors. Hospital terminal cleans should be especially thorough, covering all surfaces in a room including ceilings and walls. The use of enhanced disinfection procedures such as electrostatic spraying should also be considered but, it is important to ensure the disinfectant used is EPA registered for electrostatic application.

The process of laundering bed linens, towels, and other soft fabrics from rooms occupied by infected individuals requires special attention, particularly in a communal laundry setting. As much as possible, laundry from known contaminated rooms should be cleaned separately and at no time should the contents be opened, shaken or sorted. Ideally, the use of dissolvable laundry bags is recommended as well as the addition of a disinfecting tablet like PurTabs to attain 400 ppm and help reduce the viral load. To mitigate the risk of cross contamination, follow good basic practices and keep dirty incoming material separate from clean outgoing material in handling areas.

Most hospitals and senior care establishments are well versed in cleaning patient rooms and following contact precautions. Of greater concern are non-healthcare facilities such as hotels, hostels, shelters, prisons, and even home environments that may house infected but asymptomatic or only mildly impacted individuals. To prevent monkeypox infections from spreading, other industry sectors as well as the general public should follow the same contact precautions when cleaning guest rooms, communal living quarters and in some instances, private residences.

▲ A Note of Caution

When cleaning surfaces suspected of harboring the monkeypox virus, it is critical that appropriate PPE be worn by the individual performing the disinfection activities. As the virus presents a potential infection risk, it is highly recommended that those engaged in this work should have current vaccinations, wear gloves, eye protection, a disposable gown, and a mask, ideally a face shield. It is also important that the individuals tasked with cleaning these spaces are adequately trained in the process of donning and doffing PPE to avoid self-contamination. Laundry workers are also at risk of infection from handling contaminated materials and, as with cleaning personnel, should be provided with appropriate PPE and trained on its proper use. ■