

Markham Stouffville Hospital shines black light on germs

AMANDA PERSICO
apersico@yrmg.com

With cold and flu season approaching, Markham Stouffville Hospital reminds us how important it is to wash our hands.

During Patient Safety Week, the hospital reminded staff, physicians and patients about their role in patient safety. And proper hand hygiene remains at the top of the list.

“Hand hygiene is one of the most important things we can do in health care to prevent illness,” said hospital infection disease specialist Dr. Jeya Nadarajah. “And hand washing is the easiest thing we can do.”

But sometimes we might not do as good a job as we think.

The hospital hosted a Glo Germ demonstration, where patients and hospital staff were encouraged to see just how good a job they did washing their hands.

After the gel is applied, with a black light patients could see just how dirty their hands were.

Then they were instructed to wash hands with soap and water and using a black light again, patients could see how much of the cream remained on their hands.

“It shows what you think and

what the reality is,” said Kornelija Delibasic, infection and prevention control practitioner at the hospital.

In most cases, washing hands with lukewarm water and soap for 30 seconds does the trick. Don't forget to wash front, back and in between.

But cuticles and dry skin are especially problematic.

“Dry, rough skin acts like a carpet,” Delibasic said. “It can collect all the germ crumbs.”

To keep hand hygiene top of mind for hospital staff, hand-washing campaigns, teaching, intervention and audits are continuously taking place.

“It's all about human behaviour,” Nadarajah said.

While hand sanitizers have a bad rap, using it still gets people thinking about the dirt on their hands, she added.

“It's convenient. Sometimes we're all rushed for time. But it's better than nothing at all,” she said. “Hand sanitizers improve compliance.”

Patient safety is more than just washing hands.

The hospital has policies in place for anything that can spread disease, from a diamond ring that could poke a hole in surgical gloves,

in-house laundered scrubs to staff ID and lanyards being cleaned with wipes.

“These little policies directly affect patient safety,” Nadarajah said. “The health care worker is the vehicle that can spread infections.”

And patient safety also falls in the hands of patients themselves, where patients are encouraged to speak up and ask the doctor or nurse entering their room to wash their hands.

“Patients have every right to ask, without feeling scared or embarrassed,” Nadarajah said. “Sometimes, we're rushing in. It's their health. Call us out on it.”

Here are some fun hand washing tips for parents:

Sing a song - Twinkle Twinkle Little Star twice or the ABCs.

Use an hourglass or board game timer.

Make it routine - take off your jacket, take off your shoes, wash your hands.

Setup a kid-friendly hand washing station with fun soaps, towels and a stool so they can reach the sink.

Foam, fun-shaped soaps and automatic soap dispensers are always fun for little hands.

Wash with them. Lead by example.



Mike Barrett/Metroland

As part of Patient Safety Week, Oct. 24 to 28, the Markham Stouffville Hospital held a series of events to remind staff, physicians and patients about their role in patient safety. One of the activities involves glo-germ that is a neon gel you put on your hands before washing them. Once you have washed your hands you can see under a black light the parts of your hands you missed. Economist & Sun reporter Amanda Persico (right) demonstrates the glo-gel along with infection prevention and control practitioner Kornelija Delibasic and doctor of infectious diseases Dr. Jeya Nadarajah.



York Region's Mandatory Food Handler Certification bylaw – What does it mean to you?

Do you own, operate or work in a food premises in York Region?

Beginning January 1, 2017, all high and moderate-risk food premises in the Region must have:

- At least one owner/operator **and** one food handler with a current and valid food handler certificate
- One certified food handler present at all times during operation to supervise the processing, preparation, storage, handling, display, distribution, transportation, service and sale of food

York Region Public Health inspectors will enforce the Region's Mandatory Food Handler Certification bylaw and are authorized to issue tickets to food premises that are not in compliance.

For more information on the bylaw, or food handler certification, contact York Region Health Connection at **1-800-361-5653**, TTY **1-866-512-6228**, or visit york.ca/foodsafety

Do you shop, order from, or eat at food establishments in York Region?

Check the sign; check the sticker!

Beginning January 1, 2017, most food establishments that prepare and serve food in the Region must have a certified food handler on-site.

Make sure the establishments you eat and buy food at have certified food handlers on-site. Look for the green Proof of Public Health Inspection sign posted by their front door. A sticker on the sign means at least one certified food handler was on-site at the time of inspection.

For more information on York Region's Mandatory Food Handler Certification bylaw, contact York Region Health Connection at **1-800-361-5653**, TTY **1-866-512-6228**, or visit york.ca/foodsafety

To check food establishment inspection reports before you go, visit york.ca/yorksafes



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