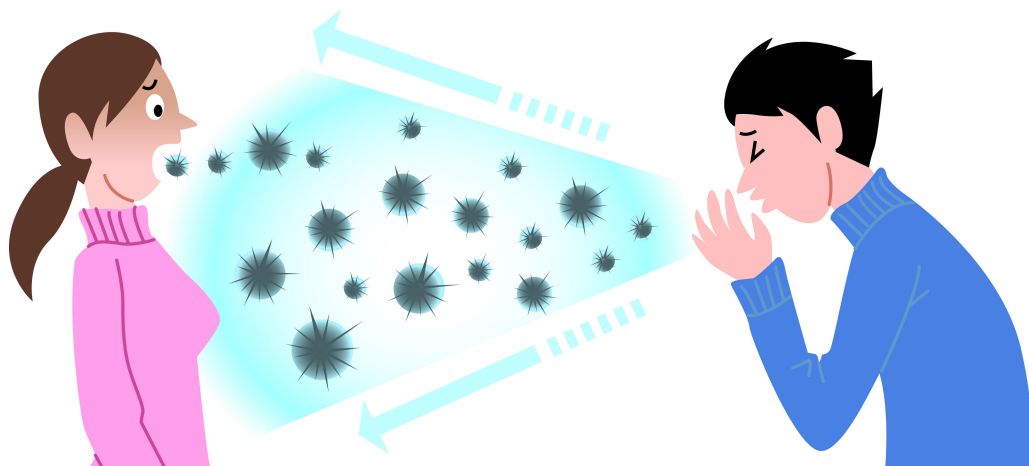


# Pause for Prevention - Cough Etiquette

Covering your cough or sneeze protects everyone from germs that may cause infection.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Immediately throw used tissues in the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
- Immediately perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash) after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/material.
- Remind residents in your care when and how to perform cough etiquette too!

**Imagine if we could see the spray from a cough or sneeze!**



[CDC: Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette in Healthcare Settings](#)  
[CDC: Water, Sanitation & Environmentally-Related Hygiene - Coughing and Sneezing](#)

**Module 2: Cough Etiquette**



**Quality Improvement Organizations**

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# Cough Etiquette

## Pause for Prevention - Module 2

### Supplies

- Spray bottle (simple spray bottle of the type that may be found at a dollar store)
- Food coloring (blue or green)
- Large pieces of drawing paper or plastic
- Tape
- Marker
- Tape measure for marking off increments of 6 inches, 3 feet and 6 feet
- Impervious (liquid resistant) gowns
- Masks
- Gloves
- Eye protection

### Preparation

- Lay or tape paper or plastic to the floor. Indicate with a marker the distance required for each scenario; 6 inches, 3 feet, and 6 feet.
- Prepare spray bottle with water and food coloring (add just a few drops of food coloring to water in bottle). Note: food coloring can stain skin and clothing; approach this step carefully.

**Lesson Ready! Use the flyer (Page 1) to share the overall message about cough etiquette.**

**Gather staff** in an area where the lesson can be carried out without disruption.

Have 3 volunteers put on (don) PPE (protective equipment) and place themselves at the marks on the paper or plastic. As you work through the scenarios, spray the water with food coloring in the direction of the gown of the volunteer (previously placed at the distances above) to demonstrate the force behind the spray of a cough or sneeze! **\*Note:** Avoid spraying in the direction of the face or any exposed skin or clothing.

**Discuss the following scenarios** using the spray bottle with food coloring to illustrate the impact of an uncovered cough.

- 1. 6 INCHES:** As a nurse, you are performing an assessment on Mr. Smith, who is in droplet isolation. You have performed hand hygiene and put on (donned) the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including a gown, gloves, mask and eye protection. You are assessing the breath sounds of Mr. Smith. This requires you to be very close (within inches) of his face. As you carefully listen to breath sounds with your stethoscope, Mr. Smith begins to cough. He has a tissue and quickly brings it to his face, but not before some spray escapes. Imagine the impact if you were not wearing a mask and other PPE!

# Cough Etiquette

## Pause for Prevention - Module 2

- 2. 3 FEET:** As a nursing assistant, you have assisted Mrs. Jones to a chair while you change the linen on her bed. Mrs. Jones begins coughing and you can see she does not make an effort to cover her cough. Her cough quickly ends, but you recognize an opportunity to remind Mrs. Jones about cough etiquette. You wash your hands and leave the room. You return to the room of Mrs. Jones with a box of tissues and gently review instruction on covering a cough (See handout, Page 1).
- 3. 6 FEET:** As a physical therapist, you have just completed balance training for Ms. Taylor in her room. Ms. Taylor asks to sit up in the chair next to the window, and once you have assisted in making her comfortable, you perform hand hygiene. As you are just in the doorway of her room, she begins coughing (related to reported seasonal allergies) and as you turn to see if Ms. Taylor requires assistance, you see that she has a tissue and is covering her cough! You smile and ask if she needs anything and when she responds that she is fine for the moment, you proceed to your next assignment thinking about the power of a cough and wondering just how far the spray from an uncovered cough can travel.

**Suggestions for scenarios that can be used to include additional roles within the facility or for more conversation about opportunities to provide assistance and education related to cough etiquette:**

### **6 INCHES - What is the appropriate response to each scenario?**

- Aide assisting resident with a meal. Resident begins coughing (unrelated to eating).
- Therapist or restorative staff doing upper extremity range of motion with resident who coughs.
- Activity instructor assisting resident to place marker on bingo card-resident coughs.

### **3 FEET - What is the appropriate response to each scenario?**

- Social worker reading the mail to resident who begins to cough.
- Receptionist signing a resident out for leave who suddenly coughs.
- Admissions coordinator conducting initial interview with resident who can't control a cough.

**Answer to above scenarios:** Encourage the resident to cover the cough with elbow if tissue is not readily available. Encourage hand hygiene. Provide tissue, and explain the importance of covering the cough.

**Remind team members that education related to cough etiquette should be provided with respect and in consideration of the resident's ability to understand what is being taught. For residents who have cognitive disability, assist them with hand hygiene after an observed cough. Provide tissue and frequently remind residents to cover their cough or sneeze.**