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SAY IT, DON'T SPRAY IT

With winter in full swing and cold and flu season upon us, it's crucial to remind everyone about the importance of respiratory etiquette. So, what is respiratory etiquette? Respiratory etiquette is a simple yet effective way to prevent illness, and is comprised of a few simple steps that everyone should be following.

Cover your cough and sneeze. The best way to do this is by turning your head away from others and covering your mouth and nose with a tissue. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

Practice effective hand hygiene. Thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand rub regularly, especially after coughing or sneezing. Remember that effective hand hygiene must be performed for 15-30 seconds. **Wear a mask to protect others.** When you are sick, wearing a mask can help to prevent the spread of germs and viruses that can make other ill. Lastly, **environmental cleaning** can prevent the spread of germs through tasks like cleaning and disinfection of commonly used or high touch surfaces, objects, and shared spaces.

Respiratory etiquette may feel like a mundane task, but we all have a role to play in preventing the spread of germs and viruses to keep both ourselves and our communities safe and healthy. According to Statistics Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, respiratory infections such as influenza and COVID-19 are ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada. Nationally, respiratory infections such as influenza cause 12,220 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths annually. In 2020, COVID-19 became the third leading cause of death in Canada, accounting for 5.3% of deaths. Many respiratory infections can be prevented with the implementation of infection prevention and control measures, and everyday practices including respiratory etiquette. Let's all remember to do our part this cold and flu season.