Best Practices for Ice and Water Dispensers

Ice and water dispensers are part of the healthcare healing environment, providing a means of serving ice and water to patients, staff, and visitors. Below are some practices to help users achieve the best possible experience with their ice and water dispensers.

- **Choose wisely**
  - Today's ice machines and dispensers have advanced features that improve the sanitation compared to older machines.
  - Look for the following features in selecting a machine
    - Frequent automatic self-flushing during operation
    - Anti-microbial protection
    - Fast and efficient cleaning and sanitizing methods to encourage compliance by facilities' teams
    - Secure lids to prevent use of storage bin as a cooler
- **Locate carefully**
  - Install dispensers away from sources of food contamination, including food tray storage and disposal receptacles, juice, coffee, microwaves and other cooking appliances. Airborne food particles from these sources can be introduced to any dispenser and become a source of biofilm growth.
  - Install dispensers away from ventilation ducts. Such airflows could be a source of airborne contamination.
  - Install dispenser in a temperature-controlled environment between 60° F and 80° F.
- **Install correctly**
  - Use rigid tubing for drain lines when possible. Ensure drain line is pitched properly with no traps or long horizontal runs.
  - Confirm the drain has an external air gap that meets local and state codes.
  - Clean and/or sanitize dispensers before initial use to remove any residual materials from the manufacturing process.
  - For countertop units, use leg kits to facilitate effective cleaning around and under the dispenser or seal the units to the counter.
- **Use properly**
  - Make sure staffs refrain from pouring liquids other than water, such as juice, soda, soup, coffee, etc. into dispenser drain. Organic matter from these sources will result in biofilm forming in drains.
  - Make sure nothing except ice is ever stored inside the ice storage bin (it does happen!)
- **Maintain diligently**
  - Clean the exterior of the machines using polishes and cleaners approved by the manufacturer.
  - Vacuum condenser coils and clean air filters per manufacturers recommendations.
  - Frequently cleaning the drain pan and drain lines with hot water and sanitizer to help alleviate drain clogs.
  - Never use pressured air or steam to clean out drain lines – this promotes the spread of bacteria in the drain systems.
- **Clean and sanitize thoroughly**
  - Periodically clean and sanitize ice and water dispensers and ice machines according to manufacturer's instructions. Typically, cleaning must be performed on at least a semiannual basis, but some environmental conditions, including incoming water quality and proximity to foreign food contaminants, may require more frequent cleanings.
  - Before beginning a cleaning, ensure that the ice machine evaporator is free of ice.
  - Sanitize the pressurized water lines before cleaning/sanitizing the ice machine. Not all manufacturers specify this, but it is important to ensure the entire machine has been sanitized.
  - Always make sure that all drain lines are open and free of buildup before beginning semi-annual maintenance.
  - Use ice machine cleaners and sanitizers recommended by the manufacturer.
  - Don't use abrasive pads or abrasive cleaners when cleaning the storage hopper or related parts.
  - Laboratory brushes may be helpful in cleaning drain lines.
  - If external components show evidence of biofilm formation the entire unit should be cleaned and sanitized.
- **Treat incoming water appropriately**
  - Select the proper water filtration system to be used prior to ice machines.
    - Traditional carbon activated filters, while effective in controlling some particulates and in improving taste, do not typically filter down to a level that will address infectious biological agents and will remove residual disinfectants from the incoming water supply. Any water filter having carbon for chlorine removal should have anti-microbial material in the filter to inhibit potential microbial growth within the filter.
    - Carbonless filters will retain any disinfectants that may be in the incoming water supply but also do not typically filter down to a level that will address infectious biological agents.
    - The use of a 0.2 micron or better bacteria-retentive filters prior to the ice machine is encouraged for additional protection against waterborne pathogens that may be present in the incoming water supply.
  - Change filters according to manufacturer's recommendations.
  - Always consult a subject matter expert if pathogens are found in your water supply.