

# Daily Bacteria Hunting in the Canadiens's Team Locker Room

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Pierre Gervais, Head Equipment Manager for Montreal Canadiens

In the Canadiens's team dressing room, Pierre Gervais makes sure that no player gets sick. A disinfecting machine sprays ozone and hydrogen peroxide and is used every week.

Hunting for bacteria and germs is a daily battle in the Canadiens's world. An "army" of staff does everything possible to prevent a player from getting sick.

Led by equipment manager Pierre Gervais, this army takes all possible measures. The Habs's locker room and headquarters are carefully taken care of. Nothing is left to chance. As a result, equipment is disinfected as well as showers and even the smallest door handle.

The deep cleansing exercise – which began about ten years ago - has expanded since the famous mumps outbreak through the NHL in December 2014. The 31 training courses are including bacterial problems. Communication is direct between the medical team and the locker room attendants.

## **Ventilation system**

Both at the Bell Centre and the Bell Sports Complex in Brossard, Pierre Gervais uses a portable machine to eliminate bacteria. At least once a week, the machine is placed in the centre of the room with all doors closed. Spraying hydrogen peroxide and ozone eliminates most bacteria on all surfaces and purifies the ambient air.

The stale air is then drawn in by a ventilation system. Within a few hours, the area is disinfected from top to bottom. If several players are ill, as is often the case during the winter, the exercise is repeated more than once a week.

"In the locker room, the heat is controlled, everything is clean and dry," explains Gervais. "When you come in, it smells good and it's clear. It no longer smells like old wet hockey rooms or garage leagues".

The Canadien's equipment manager has been sharpening his sense of smell for 40 years. In the old Boston and Buffalo amphitheatres, for example, it was quite a story to dry the equipment.

Now, with synthetic materials, the equipment dries in no time. To his delight, it makes his job easier and he no longer has to block his nose while taking care of the bags.

## **Spray largely**

Every day, Gervais and his colleagues walk around the locker room spraying equipment with a cleaning product and destroying unpleasant odours. And after each day in Brossard, two people are busy cleaning everything up, a job which takes several hours.

Twice a year, an external cleaning team disinfects the Bell Centre and Brossard Training Centre from one end to the other; also, the team has worked in February during a journey of a few games on the road.

"We are really doing everything we can to ensure that the locker room is not contaminated," says Gervais. We must be proactive. It seems to be working well. With our method, we have no problems. A locker room is a bit like a daycare centre, it may become an incubator. We must exercise caution."

Precisely, this bacteria hunt begins as soon as the players arrive. As they pass through each door leading to the locker room, they must spray their hands with disinfectants. Several antiseptic soap dispensers are available. Posters on the walls remind people of the rules to follow to avoid infections.

Because if Carey Price, Max Domi or Shea Weber got sick and missed several games due to an infection, the whole team would suffer the consequences.

## **7 TRICKS BY GERVAIS AND OUELLETTE**

### **1. QUICK DRYING**

Do not wait before taking the bag out of the car and opening it to get out and dry each piece of equipment. The faster, the better.

### **2. FIND A WARM AND VENTILATED PLACE**

It is true that the smell emanating from an equipment bag is unpleasant. But drying the equipment with temperature control and appropriate air circulation greatly helps rapid drying.

### **3. SPRAY CLEANING AND ODOUR-DESTROYING PRODUCTS**

To eliminate odours impregnated in fabrics, spraying each piece of equipment with products specially designed for sports equipment is a simple, low-cost solution, if performed repeatedly and daily. "It's fast, efficient, and limits future issues," says Gervais.

### **4. WASHING UNDER GARMENTS**

After each use, under garments should always be washed. Whether it is a simple sweater, a suit or an athletic support sheath, everything must go to the washer. And of course, when buying under garments, wash it before the first use.

### **5. WASHER-DRYER EQUIPMENT**

The majority of the equipment can be washed in the washing machine. The lining of the pants, elbow pads, gloves, shoulder pads and under garments go in the washer. "It doesn't alter the items and it cleanses thoroughly," says Pierre "Steamer" Ouellette.

### **6. DON'T FORGET THE SKATES**

Skates do not go to the washer but can be easily prevented from stinking up. Removing the soles after each use helps preserve the structure of the boot. By removing it, the skate dries faster.

### **7. DISINFECT**

A cycle in a disinfection machine available at retailers never does any harm! Even goalie equipment can be placed in the machine. It cleans with ozone, a process that kills bacteria, fungi and pathogens. Depending on the store, prices may vary. "It's true that it's not cheap, but it saves a lot of money in the end, because the equipment lasts longer," says Ouellette.

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