



Stop Germs – Prevent the Spread of Infection

Germs are everywhere – at work, school, public transportation and home. Viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs cause colds and the flu. Cold and flu viruses are usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The viruses are in the respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes and when the droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air they are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby or on nearby objects. Sometimes germs can also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a telephone and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. Did you know that some viruses can live 2 or more hours on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks?

There are some important and simple actions you can take to help stop the spread of germs:

- **Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.**

Use a tissue and then throw it away immediately. If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with your hands and then immediately wash your hands.

- **Wash your hands frequently.** Using warm soap and water rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces up to the wrist for 15 to 20 seconds and rinse thoroughly. The combination of the soap and scrubbing action dislodges and removes any germs. Dry with paper towel, use the paper towel to turn off the faucet and dispose of the paper towel immediately. Hand washing is a simple habit and one of the best ways to avoid getting sick.

- **When should you wash your hands?**

- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After changing a diaper (wash the diaper wear's hands too)
- Before and after preparing food (especially if handling raw meat, poultry or fish)
- Before eating
- Before and after treating cuts or other minor wounds

- Before and after touching a sick or injured person
- After handling garbage
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses
- **When soap and water are not readily available, alcoholbased disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used.** The alcohol in these types of wipes and gel sanitizers kills the germs without soap and water. Other types of antibacterial wipes are good but not as good as alcoholbased products. The Centers for Disease Control recommends using waterless hand sanitizers that are at least 60% alcohol. If you use a gel sanitizer, use about a half teaspoon and rub your hands together until the gel is dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when you touch something that is contaminated and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Remember, germs live a long time.
- **Teach children to practice these healthy habits too.** Teach by example. Supervise children to make sure they get the technique right. Place reminders at their eye level in the bathroom and kitchen. If children use alcohol-based waterless sanitizers please make sure that the sanitizer has completely dried before your child touches anything. This will avoid accidental ingestion of alcohol from hand to mouth contact.