



Stop Germs—Prevent the Spread of Infection

Germs are everywhere—at home, work and school. Germs can make people sick. Stopping the spread of germs can help prevent viruses such as colds and respiratory illnesses like the flu. Viruses that cause colds and the flu are usually spread when an infected person coughs and sneezes. The respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes contain the germs that make people sick. When the droplets of an infected person move through the air, they are deposited on the mouth or nose of people or objects nearby.

Sometimes germs can also be spread when a person touches an object with respiratory droplets from a sick person and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing his or her hands. Did you know that some viruses could live two or more hours on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks?

Simple, healthy habits can protect everyone from getting germs or spreading germs at home, school or work.

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home if you are sick. Do not go to work, school or run errands.
- **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.** Rub your hands vigorously using warm soap and water. Scrub all surfaces up to the wrist for 15 to 20 seconds. Rinse thoroughly. The combination of the soap and scrubbing action dislodges and removes any germs. Dry with a paper towel and use the paper towel to turn off the faucet. Hand washing is a simple habit and one of the best ways to avoid getting sick.
- **When soap and water are not available, use alcohol based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, eat nutritious food, drink plenty of fluids and get regular physical activity.