

Infection Control



All of us have bacteria, or germs, on our bodies. Many of these are good bacteria that help us to stay healthy, but some kinds of bacteria, or viruses, can cause infection.

However, there are things you can do to avoid getting or spreading infection.

How do viruses spread?

Cold and flu viruses are transmitted from person to person. Coughs and sneezes release the viruses into the air where they can be breathed in directly by others. Viruses can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs where they can be picked up and transmitted when a person touches their mouth or nose.

How can I help prevent the transmission of the flu or other infections?

Everyone should take these steps to help stop the flu and other infections:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol based hand rub (hand sanitizer)
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm - NOT your hands
- Don't share objects that might transmit infections such as toothbrushes, dishes or cutlery, or water bottles
- Keep kitchen counters and surfaces clean
- Keep well rested, be physically active, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food

Washing your hands is the single best way of preventing the spread of flu and other infections.

When should you wash your hands?

- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom
- After shaking hands
- Before and after eating and/or preparing food
- After coming into contact with someone who is sick
- Before and after sharing equipment such as computers or musical instruments

The recommended procedure for hand washing is as follows:

- Wet your hands with warm running water up to the wrists
- Apply the soap – liquid soap is preferable to bar soap
- Work the soap under fingernails and all around joints and fingers
- Fully rinse off lather under running water
- Pat your hands dry with a clean cloth or paper towel, taking care to dry thoroughly between the fingers
- Turn off the tap/spout with a paper towel or cloth

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The recommended procedure for hand washing *continued . . .*

Hand sanitizers are useful when you are not able to wash your hands with soap and water, such as when you are visiting a hospital or riding on public transit. A hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol should be used.

The recommended procedure for using hand sanitizer is:

- Place enough alcohol-based hand rub into the palm of one hand, sufficient to wet both hands completely
- Rub liquid into the palms, between fingers and under nails

Although hand sanitizers are convenient, they are not meant to replace washing your hands with soap and water.

What should I do if I'm not feeling well?

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches and possibly vomiting or diarrhea, here are some things you should do:

- Stay at home and avoid contact with other people
- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of fluids, including water, juice, soup and tea
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve fever and aches
- Call your doctor if your symptoms do not clear up after a few days
- If you are prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly as instructed, and do not stop taking them unless ordered by your doctor

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