

For Immediate Release

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Germ Prevention---It is Worth It

The Wayne-Holmes Emergency Coalition wants to help you to be ready to deal with whatever comes your way on a daily basis. This column will be published once per month to help you be prepared. We will spotlight topics and answer questions. Your safety and preparation are important to us. We hope that you find the information helpful.
Today's Topic: Germ Prevention---It is Worth It.

Here we are preparing for fall, children back in school, flu season around the corner and **germs** are rampant everywhere.

Q. How are Germs Spread?

A. The main way that illnesses, like colds and flu, are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called “droplet spread”.

This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited in the mouth or nose of people nearby. Germs can also spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his own eyes, mouth, or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses can live up to two hours, or longer, on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

Q. How Can We Stop the Spread of Germs?

A. You must take care to:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- Clean your hands often
- Remind children to practice healthy habits

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze with your hand if you do not have a tissue, then, clean your hands every time you cough or sneeze.

Germs spread, especially at school, so remind children to practice healthy habits too. The flu has caused high rates of absenteeism among students and staff in our country's schools. Influenza is not the only respiratory infection of concern in schools; nearly 22 million school days are lost each year to the common cold. However, when children and adults practice healthy habits, they miss fewer days of school and work.

Q. What are Healthy Habits?

A. Adults and students need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink lots of water, and eat good foods to help them stay healthy.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based product to clean your hands.

When washing hands with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water when available.
- Rub hands together to make lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds; sing the “Happy Birthday Song” through two times.
- Rinse hands under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

When using an alcohol-based rub:

- Apply product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before preparing or eating food.
- After going to the bathroom.
- After changing diapers or assisting a child in the bathroom.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After handling an animal or animal waste.
- After handling garbage.
- Before or after treating a cut or wound.

Hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the transmission of disease.

Stay at home when you are sick and have flu symptoms. Get plenty of rest. Keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.

Getting vaccinated with the flu shot is the single best way to protect against the flu. The flu shot is approved for people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

Remember: Prevention is the Key. It does make a difference.

You can decrease the spread of germs and viruses in your home, and from spreading from family member to family member and, sometimes, throughout a community.