

# Preventing Disease Transmission



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Adapted from the Canadian Red Cross Injury Prevention FASTGUIDES

# Hand Washing

Hand washing is an important precaution wherever you are. It helps prevent you from spreading germs that can cause many infectious diseases. Use the following guidelines for washing your hands:

Always use warm running water and a mild soap



Wet your hands and apply a small amount of soap (use liquid soap if possible), approximately the size of a dime or a quarter. You can use an antibacterial soap if you want to, but it isn't necessary.

Rub your hands together vigorously until you see a soapy lather. Keep rubbing your hands for at least 15 seconds. Make sure you scrub between your fingers, under your fingernails, and around the backs and palms of your hand.

Rinse your hands under warm running water. Leave the water running while you dry your hands.

Dry your hands with a clean, disposable towel. Be careful not to touch the faucet handles or the towel holder with your clean hands.

Turn the faucet off using the towel as a barrier between your hands and the faucet handle. Throw the used towel into a trash can that is lined with a plastic bag. Trash cans with lids that you can open with a foot pedal are best.

## Infection and how it's spread

An infection is caused by germs that invade your body.

For someone to get an infection or infectious disease, four things must happen:

1. Germs must be present in the surrounding environment.
2. The germs must enter the body.
3. Enough germs must be present in the body to cause disease.
4. The individual's natural defences must be weak.

If any one of these are missing, you won't get an infection. For example, germs present on your skin cannot harm you if they cannot enter your body. If you are immune to a particular disease because you have received a vaccination, your immune system will kill the germs in your body that cause the particular disease before you become infected.

### Coughing Etiquette

- Turn your head and cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Dispose of tissues in the nearest waste basket after use.
- Wash your hands if you have coughed or sneezed into your hands.
- Teach children proper coughing etiquette.



### How Is an Infection Spread from One Person to Another?

**Direct Contact**- for example, when you touch a wound.



**Indirect Contact** - for example, when you touch a contaminated medical equipment, clothing, bedding, dressings and sinks.



**Airborne transmission**- for example, when an infected person sneezes or cough, sending germs into the air, and you breathe in those germs



**Vector transmission**- for example, when a mosquito bites an infected person and then bites you, passing on the germs



Some diseases are spread through only one of these routes. Others may be spread through several routes.

## How to prevent diseases from spreading

### How to Prevent Diseases from Spreading

There are some basic precautions that you can take to stop diseases from spreading:

#### Personal Precautions:

Actions that individuals can take to reduce the risk of spreading disease:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Treat all blood and other body fluids as infectious materials.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Eat well and get enough exercise and sleep.

#### Equipment Precautions:

Items that protect you from direct contact with contaminated objects:

- Always use some type of barrier device between you and any material that could be infected.
- Wear safety glasses, goggles, masks, and gloves (choose non-latex or safety gloves).
- If there is a chance you might get splashed with body fluids, wear safety glasses or a face shield.
- Use dressings and facial tissues to minimize your contact with blood



#### Environmental Precautions:

The set-up of an area that reduces exposure to germs:

- Make sure that people don't use the same sink for hygiene and food preparation.
- Dispose of any contaminated materials immediately.
- Make sure there is proper ventilation in your workplace.

***You must use personal protective equipment in your workplace, however if you are helping a family member, it is your choice whether you use personal protective equipment or not.***

To prevent illness due to food and water-borne diseases:

- Practise proper food and water preparation
- Practise proper sanitation methods
- Peel or wash and soak fruits and vegetables
- Cook meat thoroughly
- Eat food immediately after cooking
- Protect cooked food from insects and other contaminants

You should wash your hands:

- Before and after contact with an ill or injured person
- After removing gloves
- When your hands look dirty
- Before eating or drinking
- After handling dirty articles, instruments, or dressings
- Before or after treating wounds
- Before going home from work