

From The Fairfield PTA Council and the Center of Disease Control

Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School

How Germs Spread

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 on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

How to Stop the Spread of Germs

In a nutshell: take care to

- Cover your mouth and nose
- Clean your hands often with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Stay home when you are sick and check with a health care provider when needed
- Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing

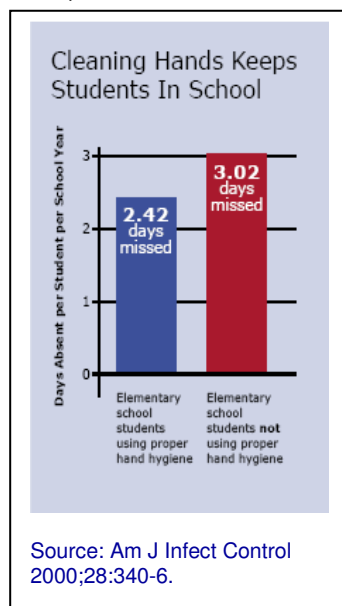
Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. If you do not have a tissue cover your cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. If you do use your hands be sure to wash them.

The "Happy Birthday" song helps keep your hands clean?

Not exactly. Yet we recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

Alcohol-Based Hand Wipes and Gel Sanitizers Work Too

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.



Practice Other Good Health Habits

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food. Practicing healthy habits will help your family stay healthy during the flu season and all year long. Remember to set a good example for your kids.

Germs and Children

Remind children to practice healthy habits too, because germs spread, especially at school. The flu has caused high rates of absenteeism among students and staff in our country's 119,000 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 alone. However, when children practice healthy habits, they miss fewer days of school.

More Facts, Figures, and How-To's

CDC and its partner agencies and organizations offer a great deal of information about hand washing and other things you can do to stop the germs that cause flu, the common cold, and other illnesses. For more information go to www.cdc.gov/flu