An Ounce of Prevention Keeps the Germs Away

Seven Keys to a Safer Healthier Home

Staying healthy is important to you and your entire family. Follow these easy, low-cost steps to help stop many infectious diseases before they happen!

1

Wash Your Hands Often

Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses. Cleaning your hands gets rid of germs you pick up from other people . . . from the surfaces you touch . . . and from the animals you come in contact with.

When to Wash

- Before eating.
- Before, during, and after handling or preparing food.
- After contact with blood or body fluids (like vomit, nasal secretions, or saliva).
- After changing a diaper.
- After you use the bathroom.
- After handling animals, their toys, leashes, or waste.
- After touching something that could be contaminated (such as a trash can, cleaning cloth, drain, or soil).
- Before dressing a wound, giving medicine or inserting contact lenses.
- More often when someone in your home is sick.
- Whenever they look dirty.

How to Wash

- Wet your hands and apply liquid, bar, or powder soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue for 20 seconds! It takes that long for the soap and scrubbing action to dislodge and remove stubborn germs. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" all the way through – twice!
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Remember: *If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe or hand gel!*

? For more information, visit **www.cdc.gov/cleanhands**

2

Routinely Clean and Disinfect Surfaces

Cleaning and *disinfecting* are not the same thing. Cleaning removes germs from surfaces – whereas disinfecting actually *destroys* them. Cleaning with soap and water to remove dirt and most of the germs is usually enough. But sometimes, you may want to disinfect for an extra level of protection from germs.

- While surfaces may *look* clean, many infectious germs may be lurking around. In some instances, germs can live on surfaces for hours — and even days.
- Disinfectants are specifically registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and contain ingredients that actually *destroy* bacteria and other germs. Check the product label to make sure it says "Disinfectant" and has an EPA registration number.

Disinfect those areas where there can be large numbers of dangerous germs – and where there is a possibility that these germs could be spread to others.

In the Kitchen:

- Clean and disinfect counters and other surfaces before, during, and after preparing food (especially meat and poultry).
- Follow all directions on the product label, which usually specifies letting the disinfectant stand for a few minutes.
- When cleaning surfaces, don't let germs hang around on cleaning cloths or towels!

  Use:

  — Paper towels that can be thrown away

  OR

  — Cloth towels that are later washed in hot water

  OR

  — Disposable sanitizing wipes that both clean *and* disinfect.

In the Bathroom:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all surfaces.

  This is especially important if someone in the house has a **stomach illness**, a **cold**, or the **flu**.

3

Handle and Prepare Food Safely

When it comes to preventing foodborne illness, there are four simple steps to food safety that you can practice every day. These steps are easy – and they'll help protect you and those around you from harmful foodborne bacteria.

CLEAN: Clean hands and surfaces often

Germs that cause foodborne illness can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto hands from cutting boards, utensils, counter tops, and food. Help stop the spread of these germs! Here's how:

- Clean your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe or hand gel.
- Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you prepare the next food.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often using the hot cycle of your washing machine. If using a sponge to clean up, microwave it each evening for 30 seconds or place it in the dishwasher.
- Rinse *all* fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water. This includes those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. For firm-skin fruits and vegetables, rub with your hands or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing.

SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate one food with another

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria spread from a food to a surface . . . from a surface to another food . . . or from one food to another. You're helping to prevent cross-contamination when you:

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery cart, grocery bags, and in your refrigerator. Be sure to use the plastic bags available in the meat and produce sections of the supermarket.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a different one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.
- Don't allow juices from meat, seafood, poultry, or eggs to drip on other foods in the refrigerator. Use containers to keep these foods from touching other foods.
- Never re-use marinades that were used on raw food, unless you bring them to a boil first.

COOK: Cook foods to proper temperatures

Foods are safely cooked when they are heated for a long-enough time and at a high-enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. The target temperature is different for different foods.

The only way to know for sure that meat is cooked to a safe temperature is to use a food thermometer. Make sure it reaches the temperature recommended for each specific food.

USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

Steaks & Roasts	Fish	Pork	Ground Beef	Egg Dishes	Chicken Breasts	Whole Poultry
145 °F	**145 °F**	**160 °F**	**160 °F**	**160 °F**	**165 °F**	**165 °F**

Cooking temperatures are listed at **www.fightbac.org/heatitup.cfm** and USDA's special Web site at **www.isitdoneyet.gov**

CHILL: Refrigerate foods promptly

Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. So, refrigerate foods quickly. Do not over-stuff the refrigerator, as cold air must circulate to help keep food safe.

- Keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40º F or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Use an appliance thermometer to be sure the temperature is consistently 40º F or below.
- The freezer temperature should be 0º F or below.
- Plan when you shop: Buy perishable foods such as dairy products, fresh meat and hot cooked foods at the end of your shopping trip. Refrigerate foods as soon as possibly to extend their storage life. Don't leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.
- If preparing picnic foods, be sure to include an ice pack to keep cold foods cold.
- Store leftovers properly.

For more information, visit **www.fightbac.org**

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Get Immunized

Getting immunizations is easy and low-cost – and most importantly, it saves lives. Make sure you and your children get the shots suggested by your doctor or health care provider at the proper time, and keep records of all immunizations for the whole family. Also, ask your doctor about special programs that provide free shots for your child.

- Children should get their first immunizations before they are 2 months old. They should have additional doses four or more times before their second birthday.
- Adults need tetanus and diphtheria boosters every 10 years. Shots are also often needed for protection from illnesses when traveling to other countries.
- Get your flu shot. The single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each fall.

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For information on immunization, visit
www.cdc.gov/nip
To learn about shots needed for travel, visit
www.cdc.gov/travel/vaccinat.htm
For more information about the flu, visit
www.cdc.gov/flu

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Use Antibiotics Appropriately

Antibiotics are powerful drugs used to treat certain bacterial infections – and they should be taken exactly as prescribed by your health care provider.

- Antibiotics don't work against viruses such as colds or the flu. That means children do not need an antibiotic every time they are sick.
- If you do get sick, antibiotics may not always help. If used inappropriately, they can make bacteria resistant to treatment – thus making illnesses harder to get rid of.

When in doubt, check with your health care provider – and always follow the antibiotic label instructions carefully.

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For more information, visit
www.cdc.gov/getsmart

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Be Careful With Pets

Pets provide many benefits to people, including comfort and companionship. However, some animals can also pass diseases to humans. Keep these tips in mind to make sure your pet relationship is a happy *and* healthy one.

- Pets should be adopted from an animal shelter or purchased from a reputable pet store or breeder.
- All pets should be routinely cared for by a veterinarian. Follow the immunization schedule that the vet recommends.
- Obey local leash laws.
- Clean litter boxes daily. NOTE: Pregnant women should not clean litter boxes.
- Don't allow children to play where animals go to the bathroom.
- Keep your child's sandbox covered when not in use.

? For more information, visit **www.cdc.gov/healthypets**

About Children and Pets

Babies and children under 5 are more likely to get diseases from animals – so keep these special guidelines in mind.

- Young children should not be allowed to kiss pets or to put their hands or other objects into their mouths after touching animals.
- Wash your child's hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with animals.
- Be particularly careful when visiting farms, petting zoos, and fairs.

7

Avoid Contact With Wild Animals

Wild animals can carry diseases that are harmful to you and your pets — but there are simple precautions you can take to avoid contact with a variety of species.

- Keep your house free of wild animals by not leaving any food around and keeping garbage cans sealed.
- Clear brush, grass, and debris from around house foundations to get rid of possible nesting sites for mice and rodents.
- Be sure to seal any entrance holes you discover on the inside or outside of your home.
- Use insect repellent to prevent ticks. Do a routine "tick check" after spending time outdoors. Ticks should be removed immediately with tweezers by applying gentle, steady pressure until they release their bite.

? For more information, visit **www.cdc.gov/hantavirus**

Wild Animals: What are the Risks?

- Mice and other wild animals can carry deadly diseases like hantavirus and plague.
- Bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes can transmit rabies.
- Ticks can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease.

Infectious Diseases: The Facts Behind the Urgency

There are many types of germs (viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi) that cause many types of illnesses – including the common cold or flu, foodborne illness, Lyme disease, hantavirus, or plague. These germs can spread easily from one person to another – and have wide-reaching effects.

- About 10 million U.S. adults (ages 18 - 69) were unable to work during 2002 due to health problems.
- Salmonella infections are responsible for an estimated 1.4 million illnesses each year.
- Infectious diseases cost the U.S. $120 billion a year.
- More than 160,000 people in the U.S. die yearly from an infectious disease.

Help keep yourself and your family healthy by making the *Seven Keys to a Safer Healthier Home* part of your permanent household routine.

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