

Prevent the spread of infectious diseases

Decrease your risk of infecting yourself or others:

- **Wash your hands often.** This is especially important before and after preparing food, before eating and after using the toilet.
- **Get vaccinated.** Immunization can drastically reduce your chances of contracting many diseases. Make sure to keep your recommended vaccinations, as well as your children's, up-to-date.
- **Use antibiotics sensibly.** Only take antibiotics when necessary. And if they're prescribed, take them exactly as directed — don't stop taking them early because your symptoms have abated.
- **Stay at home** if you have signs and symptoms of an infection. Don't go to work if you're vomiting, have diarrhea or are running a fever. Don't send your child to school if he or she has these signs and symptoms, either.
- **Be smart about food preparation.** Keep counters and other kitchen surfaces clean when preparing meals. In addition, promptly refrigerate leftovers — don't let cooked foods remain at room temperature for an extended period of time.
- **Disinfect the 'hot zones' in your home.** These include the kitchen and bathroom — two rooms that can have a high concentration of bacteria and other infectious agents.
- **Practice safe sex.** Use condoms if you or your partner has a history of sexually transmitted diseases or high-risk behavior — or abstain altogether.
- **Don't share personal items.** Use your own toothbrush, comb or razor blade. Avoid sharing drinking glasses or dining utensils.
- **Travel wisely.** Don't fly when you're ill. With so many people confined to such a small area, you may infect other passengers in the plane. And your trip won't be comfortable, either. Depending on where your travels take you, talk to your doctor about any special immunizations you may need.
- **Keep your pets healthy.** Bring your pet to a veterinarian for regular care and vaccinations. Feed your pet a healthy diet and keep your pet's living area clean.

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Food Contamination

Another way disease-causing germs can infect you is through food and water. Common-vehicle transmission allows the germs to be spread to many people through a single source. Food is the vehicle that spreads the germs and causes the illness. For instance, contamination with *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) is common. *E. coli* is a bacterium present in certain foods — such as undercooked hamburger or unwashed fruits or vegetables. When you eat foods contaminated with *E. coli*, chances are you'll experience an illness — also commonly referred to as food poisoning.



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Infectious Diseases:

How they spread and how to stop them!



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Infectious diseases spread through contact!

From the person sniffing next to you in line, to the raw chicken on your cutting board, or the doorknob leading into your office, everyday life is full of potential infectious hazards. With germs so common and seemingly everywhere, the question is: *How do you get around them and protect yourself?*

Knowing how germs spread, can help you stop them in their tracks. Find out how infectious disease is transmitted and what you can do to minimize your risk of infection.



Direct Contact

The easiest way to catch most infectious diseases is by coming in direct contact with someone, (person, animal, or for an unborn child, the mother) who is infected.

Three different ways infectious disease can be spread through direct contact are:

- **Person to person.**

The most common way for infectious disease to spread is through the direct transfer of bacteria, viruses or other germs from one person to another.

This can occur when an individual with the bacterium or virus touches, coughs on or kisses someone who isn't infected. These germs can also spread through the exchange of body fluids from sexual contact or a blood transfusion.

- **Animal to person.**

Pets can carry many germs. Being bitten or scratched by an infected animal can make you sick and, in extreme circumstances, may even cause death. Handling animal waste can be hazardous, too. You can become infected by scooping your cat's litter box or by cleaning bat or mouse droppings in your house, garage or cabin.

- **Mother to unborn child.**

A pregnant woman may pass germs that cause infectious diseases on to her unborn baby. Germs can pass through the placenta. Germs can also be passed along during labor and delivery.

Indirect Contact

Disease-causing organisms can also be passed along by indirect contact. Many germs can linger on an inanimate object, such as a tabletop, doorknob or faucet handle. When you touch the same doorknob grasped by someone infected with the flu or a cold, for example, you can pick up the germs he or she left behind. If you then touch your eyes, mouth or nose before washing your hands, you may become infected.

Infectious diseases spread through the air!

Droplet transmission

When you cough or sneeze, you send out droplets into the air around you. When you're sick with a cold or the flu — or any number of other illnesses — these droplets contain the germ that caused your illness. Spread of infectious disease in this manner is called droplet spread or droplet transmission.

Droplets travel only about three feet because they're usually too large to stay suspended in the air for a long time. However, if a droplet from an infected person comes in contact with your eyes, nose or mouth, you may soon experience symptoms of the illness. Crowded, indoor environments may promote the chances of droplet transmission — which may explain the increase in respiratory infections in the winter months.



Particle transmission

Some disease-causing germs travel through the air in particles considerably smaller than droplets. These tiny particles remain suspended in the air for extended periods of time and can travel in air currents. If you breathe in an airborne virus, bacterium or other germ, you may become infected and show signs and symptoms of the disease. Tuberculosis and SARS are two infectious diseases usually spread through the air, in both particle and droplet forms.

Infectious diseases spread through vectors and vehicles!

Bites and stings

Some germs rely on insects — such as mosquitoes, fleas, lice or ticks — to move from host to host. These carriers are known as vectors. Mosquitoes can carry the malaria parasite or West Nile virus, and deer ticks may carry the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.



The vector-borne spread of germs happens when an insect that carries the germ on its body or in its intestinal tract lands on you or bites you. The germs travel into your body and can make you sick. Sometimes the germs that cause infectious disease need the insect for specific biological reasons. They use the insect's body to multiply, which is necessary before the germs can infect a new host.