

GOT GERMS?

You could.

Germs can be found everywhere and anywhere! These tiny organisms can cause disease.

Excellent hand washing can help prevent disease

Hand washing plays a major role in preventing the spread of diseases. Washing your hands regularly with soap and water can protect you from many illnesses that are caused by viruses and bacteria.

Hand washing removes germs picked up when you touch people, animals and surfaces or when people touch you. If germs are not removed, they can enter the body through the nose, mouth, eyes and can make you sick.

When to wash hands

Wash your hands as often as you can.

Here are some examples of when to wash your hands:

- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after eating or preparing food
- After being around someone who is sick
- After handling your pets or their waste

How hand washing works

The soap allows for water to mix with dirt, grease and oil. Rubbing hands together helps to pull the dirt, grease or oils free from the skin. The warm water washes away the trapped dirt and oils where the germs are found. Wiping hands on a clean towel helps to remove more germs.

According to the World Health Organization, if you wash your hands often you'll stay a lot healthier – 24% are less likely to get a respiratory illness and 45% to 50% are less likely to get a stomach bug.

Germs are small

Germs are so small that you can not see them. They hide on remote controls, door handles, keyboards, cell phones, faucets, toys and any surface people touch. Since we can never be sure what germs are on our hands, washing them often and properly with soap and water can protect against infectious disease.

How to wash hands

Follow this hand washing technique to protect your hands from germs.

- Wet hands with warm running water
- Apply soap
- Rub hands together firmly and scrub all surfaces
- Scrub for 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice)
- Rinse with clean water
- Dry hands with a clean towel

NOTE: If soap and water are not available, use antibacterial gel or wipes (should contain at least 60% alcohol)



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Germs are spread through different methods. Knowing and understanding how germs spread is important in preventing infection. There are four possible methods of transmission for bacterium and viruses (GERMS) to spread.



1. Direct Contact:

An easy way to catch infectious diseases is by coming into physical contact with someone infected. This “someone” can be a person or an animal. There are two different ways infectious diseases can be spread through direct contact.

■ Person to person:

Occurs when an individual with a bacteria or virus touches, kisses, or coughs on someone who is not infected. Germs can be spread through an exchange of bodily fluids.

■ Animal to person:

Occurs when an interaction with an animal results in a bite or scratch. The break in skin could result in germs infecting that wound. Handling of animal waste can increase risk of exposure.



2. Indirect Contact:

Germs can stay on objects for different lengths of time. Indirect contact involves the spread of germs between people through frequently touched objects such as door knobs, railings, counters, phones, equipment at the gym and pens. When you touch the same objects as someone who is sick, you can pick up the germs they left behind. If you touch your eyes, mouth or nose before washing your hands, you could become infected.



3. Through the air:

Germs can be spread through droplet or particle transmission.

■ Droplet Transmission:

Droplets travel about three feet and are too large to stay in the air for a long time. When you cough or sneeze you spray droplets into the air around you. These droplets contain germs that can get you and others around you sick. People get sick if germs come in contact with their eyes, nose, or mouth.

■ Particle Transmission:

Some disease causing germs travel through the air in particles which are much smaller than droplets. These tiny particles can stay in the air longer and travel farther because they are so small. If you breathe in an airborne virus or bacteria you could become sick.



4. Food Contamination:

Germs can be spread through food and water. It can spread to many people from a single source. Eating unwashed fruits and vegetables, raw or under cooked food could result in sickness. Drinking contaminated water could also make you sick.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF GERMS!

- **Wash hands often.** It is important to wash before and after preparing food, before eating and after using the restroom.
- **Stay at home if sick.** Don't give germs a chance to spread. Do not go to work or send your children to school. Maintain a six foot radius around you if you or others are sick.
- **Be smart about food preparation.** Keep counters clean and cook foods properly. “When in doubt, throw it out.”
- **Keep your home clean.** Bathrooms and kitchens are areas with large numbers of germs. Use proper cleaning products to get rid of germs.
- **Don't share personal items.** Use your own toothbrush, razor or washcloth. Avoid sharing drinking glasses or dining utensils.
- **Keep your pets healthy.** Take them to a vet for regular care and vaccinations. Keep their living areas clean.