

Infection Prevention and You



Cleaning your home environment: Steps to take if someone in your house is sick

During the fall and winter months, we are more prone to illness because we spend more time indoors. It's cold and flu season, and staying healthy can be hard when you are living in the same household with sick individuals. Shared close living space creates a home for germs, especially when people are coughing and sneezing, with fevers and runny noses.

Germs spread easily throughout your house, so you are potentially at risk if you don't take proper measures. Learn the simple ways you can stay healthy this winter.

Staying healthy made simple

These tips can help provide a cleaner environment for you and your family, limiting the spread of cold and flu germs and other types of infections.

- Boost your immune system by getting proper rest and eating healthy.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water using the CDC's five simple steps:
 - 1) Wet 2) Lather 3) Scrub for at least 20 seconds 4) Rinse 5) Dry.
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unclean hands.
- Avoid or limit contact with sick individuals as much as possible.
- Create a cleaning schedule to address high-traffic areas in your house (e.g., Kitchen Sundays, Bedroom Mondays, Bathroom Tuesdays, Wash Wednesdays, etc.), and make it fun.
- Use a bleach solution to clean surfaces such as countertops, sinks, toilets, bathroom floors, and other surfaces. Chlorine bleach is effective in killing stomach viruses such as norovirus. Do not mix bleach and ammonia products together.
- Don't forget to clean high-touch areas such as remote controls, light switches, computers/keyboards, door handles, and faucets, etc. Germs can live on surfaces carrying them to the next user.
- Discard all used tissues in the trash, then perform hand hygiene (use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol).
- If symptoms persist, please see your healthcare provider for further evaluation.

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Remember: Getting a flu shot each year is the best way to prevent the flu and to protect those around you. An annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. An annual vaccine is necessary because flu viruses are constantly changing.

Above all, remember the importance of hand hygiene and its ability to prevent the spread of infections.

Additional resources

- The CDC—12 Ways to Have a Healthy Holiday Season <https://www.cdc.gov/features/healthytips/index.html>
- The CDC—Household Cleaning & Sanitizing <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/cleaning-sanitizing/household-cleaning-sanitizing.html>
- APIC—Clean Your Hands Often <http://professionals.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-basics/clean-your-hands-often/>
- APIC—Ask about Vaccination <http://professionals.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-basics/ask-about-vaccination/>
- APIC—Staying Healthy at Home <http://professionals.site.apic.org/settings-of-care/non-healthcare-setting/home/>
- WebMD—Dos and Don'ts When Someone in Your House Is Sick <https://symptoms.webmd.com/cold-flu-map/stop-spread-cold-flu>

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