

Infection Prevention and You



How to be a good (and healthy) roommate

It's that time of year again. School has started, and many young adults are heading off to college for the first time. There will be new adventures and experiences. One of these new experiences may include having a roommate. Another might be using a community bathroom and shower. Personal hygiene may not be a priority for everyone on your dorm floor, so we want to give you some tips on how to be a good roommate and how to stay healthy while you're away at school.

Don't let unwanted visitors in

Eating late night pizza in your dorm room is a rite of passage. It has to be done. But you should avoid keeping pizza boxes laying around with just a few bits of crust and the occasional pepperoni sliver. Leaving those around can attract bugs (mainly cockroaches) and possibly bigger things (such as mice and rats). All of these pests can carry diseases. In order to prevent these unwanted "visitors" in your room, don't let your takeout boxes pile up. Keep your room clean to avoid attracting pests—and glares from your roommate.

Keep your germs to yourself

Sniffles, coughs, sneezes, aches, and chills just a few symptoms of flu. Flu season starts soon after school starts. Don't wait until you start to feel crummy. Be proactive and get your flu shot as soon as it's available. Getting the flu shot takes minutes, and it can save you from a week or more in bed, missing all of the fun fall activities. If you do need to cough or sneeze, cough into your elbow or sleeve. If you have mucous, cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw that away. Always remember to wash your hands afterwards.

For most things, sharing is caring. Sharing germs is not. In order to prevent sharing germs with your friends, it's probably best to be a little selfish. Don't share utensils, combs or brushes, toothbrushes, razors, drinking glasses/cups. And also be sure to use condoms (or other barriers) when having sex. You don't want to run the risk of sharing things like [meningitis](#), [flu](#), [hepatitis](#), [HIV/AIDS](#), [lice](#), or even the common cold.

If you have a community bathroom, it would be wise to make a cheap investment into some shower shoes. Fungus can grow in shower stalls. If you have even microscopic cracks on your feet, you can end up with a fungal infection if you don't wear some flip-flops or another type of protective water shoe.

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Staying healthy: It's in your hands

The absolute most important thing you can do to be a good and healthy roommate is to **wash your hands**! Washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the #1 way to prevent the spread of germs. Encourage your roommate to do it too! Be sure to wash your hands after using the bathroom; after sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing; before eating; if you're around someone who is sick; or whenever your hands are dirty.

Now get out there and enjoy those new experiences. Just make sure that illness isn't one of them.

Additional Resources

APIC consumer alert—Clean your hands often! <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=clean-your-hands-often>

APIC consumer alert—Meningococcal disease: What it is and how to prevent it <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=meningococcal-disease-what-it-is-and-how-to-p>

APIC consumer alert—Influenza immunization <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=influenza-and-pneumococcal-immunization>

APIC consumer alert—Hepatitis <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=hepatitis>

APIC consumer alert—World AIDS Day: "The time to act is now." <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=world-aids-day-the-time-to-act-is-now>

APIC consumer alert—Scabies and lice — How nice! <http://www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=scabies-and-lice-how-nice>

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