

INSPIRED

To Make Healthy Choices

Staying healthy can be as simple as awareness, such as thinking about where you might pick up germs throughout the day.

Of course, we know not all germs are bad, but limiting our exposure to the bad ones is the goal. Germs (the catchall name for bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms) are everywhere--at home, the office, the grocery store, even in your car.

Luckily, about 99% of germs can't harm us.

You already know germ hot spots exist at the doctor's office and on the soles of your shoes. The following tips will help in lowering the amount of germs in your everyday environment.

▶ **Kitchen:** Disinfect surfaces often. Microwave sponges for 30 to 60 seconds or put them in the dishwasher every other day. Disinfect chopping boards following use. Wipe fridge seals at least once a week with a diluted bleach solution or disinfectant. Change towels or launder at least twice a week in hot water and bleach. Once a week, clean the garbage disposal's rubber stopper with a diluted bleach solution--**soap and water aren't enough.** Weekly, remove the metal aeration screen at the end of the faucet and soak it in a diluted bleach solution. Replace the screen, and let the water run for a few minutes before using.

▶ **Laundry:** Wash linens and towels in hot water; dry immediately and thoroughly, since bacteria and fungi build up on damp items. Wash hands after loading your washer.

▶ **Bathroom:** Disinfect bathroom surfaces. Keep toothbrushes separated and replace them every 3 to 4 months.

▶ **General:** Change your vacuum bag frequently. Spray the doormat once a week with a fabric-safe disinfectant (such as Lysol Disinfectant Spray). Leave shoes at the door, and avoid resting bags and groceries on the mat.

▶ **Commuting or Traveling:** Avoid touching escalator rails, elevator buttons and gas pumps with bare hands. Wear socks through airport security. On planes, keep the commode lid closed when flushing. Use a paper towel to handle faucets and door handles after washing hands. Regularly wipe the inside of your car with disinfecting wipes, especially during allergy season.

▶ **At the Office:** Use a paper towel on all communal handles and buttons. Use disinfecting wipes regularly on your desk, phone, keyboard, mouse, light switches and pens. If you have a food drawer, clean it regularly.

▶ **Outside Activities:** Always be aware of what you are touching outside of your home. Things like playground equipment, shopping carts, restaurant menus, public bathrooms, headphones, water bottles and hospital TV remotes are germ hot spots.

▶ **Frequently Used Personal Items:** Use a disinfecting wipe a few times a week, and be conscious of where you rest personal items such as your:

- ◆ Makeup case, purse, keys and cell phones for women; and
- ◆ Wallet, hand-held electronic devices, keys, remote control and cell phones for men.

Washing your hands after contact with surfaces and other people's hands is the best protection against germs. **Be sure to scrub your hands thoroughly for 15 to 20 seconds with plenty of hot water.** "Good" hand washing techniques include using an adequate amount of soap, rubbing the hands together to create friction, and rinsing under running water. The use of gloves is not a substitute for hand washing.

Being aware of germs and creating a regular schedule of cleaning will mean less germ-friendly places and a cleaner, healthier environment for you, your families and co-workers.

Be aware!
What did you touch today?

Have to sneeze or cough?
Do it in your elbow.

Best protection against germs?
Washing your hands!

Clean and disinfect surfaces
and objects.

For more information:
AVOIDING GERMS
www.guideinc.org

