



# Home Hygiene

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Most people associate germs (bacteria, fungi, viruses) with out-door or health care environments. But many germs that can cause infectious illnesses, such as upper-respiratory infections, flu, the common cold and food borne sicknesses, are right in our homes and impact our daily lives.

## **According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

10 million adults in the U.S. missed work due to health problems. Salmonella infections cause over one million illnesses annually. Infectious diseases cost the U.S. more than \$100 billion annually. More than 160,000 people in the U.S. die annually from an infectious disease.

For these reasons it is important to make home hygiene a natural part of your family's daily routine. The following reminders will help you to do just that.

## **Wash Your Hands Often**

Keeping your hands clean is the first line of defense against spreading germs and illnesses. Rubbing your hands together with soap and clean, warm water for 20 seconds works best. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based gel or wipe. You should wash your hands:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- After using the bathroom.
- After changing diapers.
- Before and after tending to anyone who is sick.
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After handling an animal or pet waste.

- After handling garbage.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.

### **Clean and Disinfect Surfaces**

Cleaning with soap and water removes germs from surfaces. A disinfectant actually destroys germs. A clean-looking surface may still have germs that can cause infectious diseases.

#### **To protect against kitchen germs:**

- Clean and disinfect surfaces before, during and after food preparation.
- Follow all directions on product labels.
- Use paper towels or other disposable cloths, or cloth towels you can launder.
- To banish bathroom germs:
  - Clean and disinfect all surfaces routinely (especially if someone in the household is ill). A solution of chlorine bleach (one tablespoon of bleach to four cups of water) works well and should be discarded daily.
- Handle and Prepare Food Safely
- To protect against food borne bacteria:
  - Clean hands and surfaces often. Separate meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery cart, bags and in your refrigerator.
  - Use one cutting board for fresh produce and one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.

### **Vacuum Once or Twice Weekly**

Controlling the home environment is an important part of asthma and allergy care. When you have allergic symptoms or asthma, you are sensitive to the allergens that can activate symptoms. These triggers include particles carried in the air and can set off a reaction in your lungs and other parts of your body. They can include:

- Cold air.
- Tobacco smoke and wood smoke.
- Perfume, paint, hairspray or any strong odors or fumes.
- Dust mites, pollen, molds, pollution and animal dander.
- Common cold, influenza and other respiratory illnesses.

Carpeting is a haven for bacteria and dust mites, but furniture and beds are actually the most concentrated source of dust mites. Because of this, any home allergy-proofing regimen should start with encasing your mattresses and pillows, and regular vacuuming can help to remove dust mites. People with allergies should use a vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate) filter or a double bag, since using a standard or water-filtered vacuum cleaner stirs dust into the air. Allergic individuals should wear dust masks if vacuuming. Regular vacuuming keeps allergens to a minimum.

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