



GERMS AND STAYING HEALTHY

What are Germs: Germs are tiny organisms (living things), that can cause diseases. Germs are so small and sneaky that they creep into our bodies without being noticed. Germs are so tiny that you need to use a microscope to see them! When they get in our bodies, we have no idea until we have symptoms that say....we've been attacked!

What Types of Germs Are There? Germs are found all over the world, in all kinds of places. The four major types of germs are: bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. They can invade plants, animals, and people, and *sometimes* they make us sick.

How do germs spread? Whatever you did today, you came into contact with germs. People pick up germs almost everywhere and then become infected when they touch their eyes, nose or mouth. It's easy for a germ on your hand to end up in your mouth. Think about how many foods you eat with your hands and how many things you have touched before. Viruses and bacteria spread easily from person to person and this is why you should be aware of keeping yourself germ free and clean!

Wash hands: Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs and sickness. When washing hands make sure to first wet the hands thoroughly with warm water, then use enough soap to create a bubbly lather and rub the hands vigorously for 20 seconds then rinse and dry. Kids especially, should wash their hands frequently: before all meals and after outdoor activities.

Cover your mouth and nose: When you sneeze or cough try not to spread your germs onto someone or something that will pass it on. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or cover your cough or sneeze with the inside of your elbow. Be sure to clean your hands every time you cough or sneeze.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth: Try not to constantly touch your eyes, nose, or mouth! Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is covered with germs and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more) on almost any surface.

Stay home when you are sick: When you are sick or have flu symptoms, **stay home**, get plenty of rest to allow your body to heal. If you or your child is the one who is sick remember that keeping your distance from others may protect them from getting sick. Common symptoms of the flu are:

- fever (usually high)
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches
- nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, (much more common among children than adults).

Practice other good health habits: Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Practicing healthy habits will help you stay healthy during flu season and all year long.

GLOSSARY:

Bacteria (back-teer-ee-uh): are tiny, one-celled creatures that get nutrients from their environments in order to live. In some cases that environment is a human body. Bacteria can reproduce outside of the body or within the body as they cause infections. Some infections bacteria cause include sore throats, ear infections, cavities, and pneumonia.

Viruses (vy-rus-iz): Viruses need to be inside living cells to grow and reproduce. Most viruses cannot survive very long if they're not inside a living thing like a plant, animal, or person. Whatever a virus lives in is called its host. When viruses get inside people's bodies, they can spread and make people sick. Viruses cause chickenpox, measles, flu, and many other diseases. Because some viruses can live for a while on something like a doorknob or countertop, be sure to wash your hands regularly!

Fungi (fun-guy): These are multi-celled plant-like organisms. Fungi cannot make their own food from soil, water, and air. Instead, fungi get their nutrition from plants, people, and animals. They live in damp, warm places, and many fungi are not dangerous in healthy people.

Protozoa (pro-toh-zoh-uh): These are one-cell organisms that love moisture and often spread diseases through water. Some protozoa cause intestinal infections that lead to diarrhea, nausea, and belly pain.

Information taken from:

1. www.family.go.com, Disney Family .CO
2. www.seniorhealth.about.com