

Healthy Living Made Simple: Habits for Everyday Wellness and Protection

By Sheldon Riklon, M.D.

Germs and bacteria can spread quickly between people and through shared surfaces. Practicing these healthy habits can help stop the spread of germs and prevent illness.

Stay home if sick and avoid close contact.

If you are sick, stay home from work or school. Avoiding close contact with others helps prevent the spread of illness.

Cover your mouth and nose.

Respiratory illnesses like the flu, COVID-19 and RSV are spread by coughing, sneezing or unclean hands. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze to keep others healthy.

Wash your hands.

Washing your hands is one of the best ways to stay healthy and prevent the spread of germs. Make handwashing a regular habit, especially:

- Before and after preparing or eating food
- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After taking out the trash

Washing your hands is quick and simple. Remember these five steps for healthy hands:

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water.
2. **Lather** them with soap, including the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. **Rinse** under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** with a clean towel or air dryer.

If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

Germs can live on surfaces like doorknobs, light switches and countertops. Clean and disinfect these high-touch areas regularly to remove viruses, bacteria or other germs.

Get vaccinated.

Vaccines are one of the best ways to prevent illness. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, helping your body to defend itself. Then, if you are exposed to a virus later, your body will know how to fight it.

Most insurance plans cover yearly flu and COVID-19 vaccines. You can get yours at your doctor's office, local pharmacy or health department.

Practicing these habits every day will help keep you and your family healthy all year long. If you want more tips on how to stay healthy, a community health worker can help. Visit communityhealth.uams.edu to connect with one today.

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