

# STOP IT DON'T SPREAD IT

## Stopping Germs at Home, Work, School, and Daycare

### HOW GERMS ARE SPREAD

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes.

When an infected person coughs or sneezes droplets move through the air, they are deposited on nearby surfaces or the mouths or noses of people close-by. Sometimes microbes or germs (virus and bacteria) also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

### STAY HOME IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD IS SICK

When you or your child have flu symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest and check with a healthcare provider as needed. Keeping your distance from others may protect them from getting sick as well! Common symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea

### HOW TO STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

- Cover your mouth and nose
- Clean your hands often
- Remind your children to practice healthy habits, especially at school or daycare

**Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing:** Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

**Wash your hands:** Wash your hands — with soap and warm water — wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

**Alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work too:** When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or hand gel may be used. You can find these products in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

For more information on health issues see the South Dakota Department of Health website at: [doh.sd.gov](http://doh.sd.gov)

## **ROUTINELY CLEAN AND DISINFECT SURFACES**

Cleaning surfaces with soap and water removes dirt and most germs. As an added safety measure, we recommend using a disinfectant on surfaces as well to kill germs.

## **GERMS AND CHILDREN**

Remind children to practice healthy habits too, because germs spread, especially at school and daycare.

In past years, the flu has caused high rates of absenteeism among students and staff. However, influenza is not the only respiratory infection of concern in schools. Schools days are also lost each year to the common cold. When children practice healthy habits, they miss fewer days of school.

## **AVOID USING PUBLIC DRINKING FOUNTAINS**

Parents, you may want to send a water bottle with your child to school or daycare to avoid using public drinking fountains. Assure it is clearly marked with your child's name, and that it is properly washed each day.

## **APPROPRIATE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS**

Antibiotics do not work against viruses such as colds and flu. Antibiotics should only be taken as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

## **AVOID CONTACT WITH WILD ANIMALS**

Wild animals can transmit deadly diseases to you and/or your pet. Do not leave any food lying around your house and yard to keep wild animals at bay. Eliminate anything that could be used by a wild animal as a possible nesting site.

### **FACT:**

*Adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** getting symptoms and up to 7 days after getting sick. **That means that you can give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as while you are sick.***

### **IMMUNIZATIONS:**

Make sure your children are given the recommended immunizations as they grow. Immunizations against childhood diseases is an inexpensive way to save lives.

[See immunization chart on the DOH website.](#)

### **A FEW FACTS**

- Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to 2 hours or more on surfaces like tables, doorknobs, and desks.
- Children lose many days of school due to the common cold alone.
- Students need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water, and eat good food to help them stay healthy.



SOUTH DAKOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

For more information on health issues see the South Dakota Department of Health website at: [doh.sd.gov](http://doh.sd.gov)

For other health information see the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at:

[www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html) and [www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm)