

Being sick costs you a lot.

It costs you a lot of time.
Each year Americans are sick more than 4 billion days.

It costs you a lot of money.
They spend almost 950 billion dollars on direct medical costs.

But the biggest cost of all is the cost of a life.
Over 160,000 die due to infectious diseases as the underlying cause of death.

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Being sick does cost too much. Especially since there are some steps you can take to prevent getting sick in the first place.

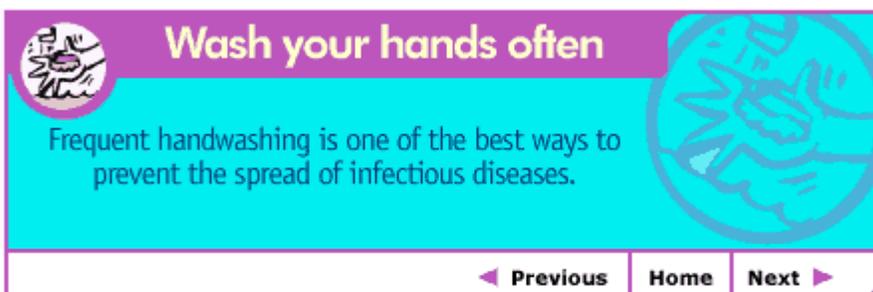
Scientists at the CDC have identified some simple things you and your family can do to prevent getting infectious diseases. But first, you may be wondering, what are infectious diseases?

Well, they are diseases caused by various types of microscopic germs such as

- Viruses
- Bacteria
- Parasites
- Fungi.

These germs cause illnesses that range from common ailments like a cold and the flu; to disabling conditions such as Lyme disease and polio; to deadly diseases like Hantavirus and AIDS. The bad news is that some of these diseases can be quite serious.

The good news is that many of those diseases can be prevented through amazingly simple and extremely inexpensive methods. Many of these methods are not new. And many were taught to us by our parents. But we get in a hurry and get out of the habit of practicing these simple but important prevention steps.



Wash your hands often

Frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

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The most important thing that you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands.

By frequently washing your hands you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, or from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.

What happens if you do not wash your hands frequently?

You pick up germs from other sources and then you infect yourself when you

- Touch your eyes
- Or your nose
- Or your mouth.

One of the most common ways people catch colds is by rubbing their nose or their eyes after their hands have been contaminated with the cold virus.

You can also spread germs directly to others or onto surfaces that other people touch. And before you know it, everybody around you is getting sick.

The important thing to remember is that, in addition to colds, some pretty serious diseases -- like hepatitis A, meningitis, and infectious diarrhea -- can easily be prevented if people make a habit of washing their hands.

When should you wash your hands?

You should wash your hands often. Probably more often than you do now because you can't see germs with the naked eye or smell them, so you do not really know where they are hiding.

It is especially important to wash your hands

- Before, during, and after you prepare food
- Before you eat, and after you use the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- When your hands are dirty, and
- More frequently when someone in your home is sick.

What is the correct way to wash your hands?

- First wet your hands and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Place the bar soap on a rack and allow it to drain.
- Next rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue for 10 - 15 seconds or about the length of a little tune. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
- Rinse well and dry your hands.

It is estimated that one out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom. So these tips are also important when you are out in public.

Washing your hands regularly can certainly save a lot on medical bills. Because it costs less than a penny, you could say that this penny's worth of prevention can save you a \$50 visit to the doctor.



Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces

Cleaning with soap, water, and scrubbing removes dirt and most germs. However, disinfecting kills germs on surfaces, providing an extra margin of safety.

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Another way to help you keep the germs away is to routinely clean and disinfect surfaces.

What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?

Cleaning and disinfecting are not the same thing. In most cases, cleaning with soap and water is adequate. It removes dirt and most of the germs. However, in other situations disinfecting provides an extra margin of safety.

You should disinfect areas where there are both high concentrations of dangerous germs and a possibility that they will be spread to others. That is because disinfectants, including solutions of household bleach, have ingredients that destroy bacteria and other germs. While surfaces may look clean, many infectious germs may be lurking around. Given the right conditions some germs can live on surfaces for hours and even for days.

Do you know where the "hot zones", or the contaminated areas, are in your home?

The kitchen is one of the most dangerous places in the house because of the infectious bacteria that are sometimes found in raw food such as chicken. Also, there is a potential for germs to be spread to other people because that is where food is prepared. You cannot always tell where or when germs are hiding. When you touch a contaminated object you can contaminate other surfaces that you touch afterwards and spread the germs to others.

Another potential hot zone is the bathroom. Routinely cleaning and disinfecting the bathroom reduces odors and may help prevent the spread of germs when someone in the house has a diarrheal illness. And do not forget your child's changing table and diaper pail.

What is the best way to routinely clean and disinfect surfaces?

- You should follow the directions on the cleaning product labels. And be sure to read safety precautions as well.
- If you are cleaning up body fluids such as blood, vomit, or feces, you should wear rubber gloves, particularly if you have cuts or scratches on your hands or if a family member has AIDS, Hepatitis B, or another bloodborne disease. And it is also a good idea to clean and disinfect surfaces when someone in the home is sick.
- To begin, clean the surface thoroughly with soap and water or another cleaner
- After cleaning, if you need to use a disinfectant, apply it to the area, and let it stand for a few minutes or longer, depending on the manufacturers recommendations. This keeps the germs in contact with the disinfectant longer.
- Wipe the surface with paper towels that can be thrown away or cloth towels that can be washed afterwards.
- Store cleaners and disinfectants out of the reach of children.
- And remember, even if you use gloves, wash your hands after cleaning or disinfecting surfaces.



Handle and prepare food safely

- Buy perishable foods at the end of your shopping trip.
- Store food properly.
- Use care when preparing meals and cook foods well.
- Cool and promptly store leftovers.

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Almost everyone has experienced a food borne illness at some point in time. But do we only get sick from restaurant food? No, in fact many cases of food borne illnesses occur when food is prepared at home. If food is handled and prepared safely, most of those can be avoided. All food may contain some natural bacteria, and improper handling gives the bacteria a chance to grow. Also, food can be contaminated with bacteria from other sources that can make you ill. Contaminated or unclean food can be very dangerous, especially to young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems. Each year in the United States, approximately 76 million people get sick, more than 300,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 Americans die each from food borne illness.

There are four major tips you can use to prevent contaminating food.

1. Use caution when you buy your food.

- Buy perishable food such as meat, eggs, and milk last.
- Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk.
- Because eggs, meat, seafood, and poultry are most likely to contain bacteria, do not allow their juices to drip on other food.
- Shop for groceries when you can take food home right away so that it does not spoil in a hot car.

2. Store your food properly.

- Store eggs, raw meat, poultry, and seafood in the refrigerator.
- Use containers to prevent contaminating other foods or kitchen surfaces.
- Your refrigerator should be set at 40° F.
- Your freezer should be set at 0° F.
- Regularly clean and disinfect the refrigerator and freezer.

3. Use special precautions when preparing and cooking food.

- Wash your hands and clean and disinfect kitchen surfaces before, during and after handling, cooking, and serving food.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Defrost frozen food on a plate either in the refrigerator or in a microwave, but not on the counter.
- Cook food immediately after defrosting.
- Use different dishes and utensils for raw foods than you use for cooked foods.

Cooking Guidelines

Eggs

- Cook eggs until they are firm and not runny.
- Do not eat raw or partially cooked eggs.
- Avoid eating other foods that include raw or partially cooked eggs.

Poultry

- Cook poultry until it has an internal temperature of 180° F .
- It is done when the juices run clear and it is white in the middle.
- Never eat rare poultry.

Fish

- Cook fish until it is opaque or white and flaky.
- Cook ground meat to 160° F.

Meat

- It is done when it is brown inside. This is especially critical with hamburger meat.

4. Cool and promptly store leftovers after food has been served.

- Because harmful bacteria grow at room temperature keep hot food hot at 140° F or higher, and keep cold food cold at 40° F or cooler. This is especially important during picnics and buffets.
- Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.
- Promptly refrigerate or freeze leftovers in shallow containers or wrapped tightly in bags.

Basically use common sense and when in doubt, throw it out. It is much cheaper to throw out bad food than it is to pay expensive medical bills or miss work.

Get immunized

Getting immunizations is easy, inexpensive, and can save lives. Make sure you and your children get immunizations as recommended by your health care provider.

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Did you know that in the United States measles and diphtheria used to kill thousands of people a year? Or that in 1952, 20,000 people were crippled from polio? We might think we do not have to worry about these diseases today because, thanks to vaccines, we do not see them nearly as often as we used to. But they're still around and they're still dangerous.

Why are immunizations important?

Getting you and your family immunized is a very easy way to prevent getting some very serious diseases.

About 128,000 people still get infected with hepatitis B virus each year. There's no cure but a simple immunization can prevent it. By getting immunized your family fights disease in two ways. First, you protect yourselves, but also you protect others, because if you don't have a disease you can't spread it to someone else.

What is an immunization?

Sometimes immunizations are called vaccinations or just shots. And they help our body fight diseases.

What diseases can immunizations prevent?

The following ten dangerous diseases are prevented by routine shots given to children.

- Polio
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella (or German measles)
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Whooping cough
- Meningitis
- Chicken pox
- Hepatitis B

There are other shots for diseases given to both adults and children if they are at risk of getting those diseases or they are likely to have serious complications if they get them. Examples of these include:

- Hepatitis A
- Flu
- Pneumonia

Without shots your children could get these diseases. And these diseases can also lead to pneumonia, brain damage, severe eye problems, paralysis, or other serious problems.

When should you or your family be immunized?

Immunizations for Children

Many "baby shots" protect your children for the rest of their lives. The following schedule is recommended:

- Children should get their first shots no later than 2 months of age, and
- Return for shots 4 or more times before they're two years old.
- Some diseases need booster shots when your child is older.

Ask your doctor when you and your family need vaccines. And be sure to keep your immunization records in a safe place.

Immunizations for Adults

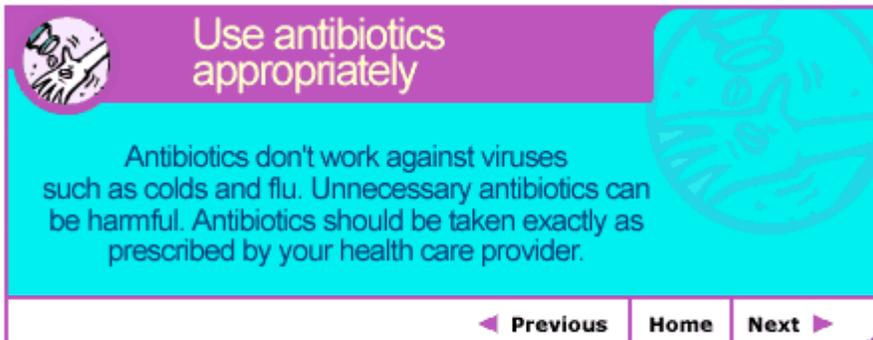
Adults need immunizations too, because each year thousands of adults die unnecessarily from flu, pneumonia and hepatitis B.

- You need tetanus and diphtheria shots repeated every 10 years.
- You may need shots when traveling to other countries.

How much do immunizations cost?

Shots are inexpensive but the diseases they prevent can be very expensive. While public health clinics may charge a small service fee, they may provide free vaccines. And ask your doctor about special programs that provide free shots to your children.

Most people are getting their families immunized so many serious diseases are at an all time low in the United States. But some of them are still common in other countries. If we stop vaccinating, they could easily return to the United States. Thanks to vaccinations smallpox, a deadly disease has been wiped out and polio will soon be gone, too. With immunizations we not only can prevent some very serious diseases, but actually eliminate them from the world. **It is easy, inexpensive, and it saves lives.**



Use antibiotics appropriately

Antibiotics don't work against viruses such as colds and flu. Unnecessary antibiotics can be harmful. Antibiotics should be taken exactly as prescribed by your health care provider.

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Getting you and your family immunized is an important way to prevent getting sick. But if you do get sick it is important to use antibiotics appropriately. Antibiotics are powerful drugs used to treat certain illnesses. But antibiotics do not cure everything, and unnecessary antibiotics can even be harmful.

Viruses versus bacteria

Basically, there are two main types of germs that cause most infections. These are viruses and bacteria.

Viruses	Bacteria
<i>Viruses cause:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All colds and flu• Most coughs• Most sore throats	<i>Bacteria cause:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most ear infections• Some sinus infections• Strep throat• Urinary tract infections
Antibiotics cannot kill viruses	Antibiotics do kill specific bacteria

Drug-resistant bacteria

Each time you take an antibiotic, bacteria are killed. Sometimes bacteria may be resistant or become resistant. Resistant bacteria do not respond to the antibiotics and continue to cause infection.

Each time you take an antibiotic unnecessarily or improperly, you increase your chance of developing drug-resistant bacteria. So it is really important to take antibiotics only when necessary. Because of these resistant bacteria, some diseases that used to be easy to treat are now becoming nearly impossible to treat.

What do you need to know about antibiotics?

- Remember that antibiotics don't work against colds and flu, and that unnecessary antibiotics can be harmful.

- Talk to your health care provider about antibiotics and find out about the differences between viruses and bacteria --and when antibiotics should and shouldn't be used.
- If you do get an antibiotic, be sure to take it exactly as prescribed--that may help decrease the development of resistant bacteria.
- Antibiotic resistance is particularly dangerous for children, but it can occur in adults as well.

One final note is that taking antibiotics appropriately and getting immunized will help prevent having to take more dangerous and more costly medications. If we use antibiotics appropriately we can avoid developing drug resistance. We just need to take our medicine exactly as it is prescribed and not expect to take antibiotics every time we're sick.



Owning a pet can be a rewarding experience for children and adults. And you can make sure it's a healthy experience by following a few simple tips. It all starts with keeping your pet healthy and being a responsible pet owner.

How can you keep your pet healthy?

- Adopt your pet from an animal shelter or purchase it from a reputable pet store or breeder.
- Have your new companion checked out right away by a veterinarian.
- Keep your pet under a veterinarian's care for regularly scheduled shots and treatment for worms. This reduces the chance that your pet could get sick and pass an infection to you or your family. Since the cost of veterinary care may not be within everyone's reach, the local animal shelter or humane society may have information about low-cost clinics.
- Give your pet a balanced diet and do not allow it to eat raw food or drink out of the toilet.
- Clean your pet's living area at least once a week. Bury the feces, or place them in a plastic bag and then put it in the trash.
- Litter boxes should be cleaned daily and the dirty litter placed in a plastic bag. To prevent infectious diseases that may cause birth defects, pregnant women should not change cat litter boxes. A child's sandbox can become a cat's litter box so cover it when not in use. Areas that have been contaminated with dog or cat feces should be off limits to children -- not only at home but also in public areas such as parks or playgrounds. And because toddlers naturally explore their environment, teach children not to eat dirt
- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling or cleaning up after animals, especially reptiles. Teach your children to do the same. This is also important after contacting dirt because hookworms from animal feces in the soil can enter through your skin.

What about having a wild animal as a pet?

In general, wild animals do not make good pets because they are not tame and do not adapt well to living in a house. But if you must have one make sure you know about any special needs the animal has or diseases it can transmit before buying it from a pet store.

What's the most serious disease that animals can transmit to people?

The most serious disease that animals can transmit to people is rabies. But, because responsible pet owners are keeping their animals immunized each year, the number of rabies cases in the United States has been drastically reduced. However, rabies is still found in wild animals. Cats, as well as dogs, should be immunized against rabies.

Why should you have your pet immunized against rabies?

Having your pet immunized protects it against rabies if it's attacked by a rabid animal. But if your pet is not immunized, it could get rabies and then give it to you or your family. So obey local leash laws and control your pets so that they do not come into contact with, or prey on, wild animals.

What should you do if you are bitten or scratched by an animal?

Each year almost 800,000 persons bitten by dogs or cats require medical attention. So, never approach an unfamiliar animal. If you do get bitten or scratched always

- Wash the area with soap and water.



Avoid contact with wild animals

Wild animals can transmit deadly diseases to you and your pets. Keep your house free of wild animals by not leaving any food around and by eliminating possible nesting sites.

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Basically, you and your pets need to avoid contact with rodents and other wild animals because they can carry some very deadly diseases. For example:

- Rodents can transmit Hantavirus and plague.
- Ticks can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme disease.
- Mammals such as raccoons, skunks, and foxes can transmit rabies. In fact, bats cause most of the human rabies cases in this country.

When are most wild animals active?

Most wild animals come out at night and are afraid of people. So, if you see a wild animal during the day, you should avoid having contact with it and notify animal control authorities because it may have rabies.

How can you discourage animals from nesting in your house?

- Keep your home clean.
- At night when insects, rodents and other animals search for food, keep tight-fitting lids on food containers and on the garbage containers.
- Discard any excess food and take up pet water bowls when not in use.

How can you discourage animals from entering your house?

The closer wild animals live to your house, the more likely they are to find a way inside.

- Eliminate any possible nesting sites and items that provide a water source.
- Seal entrances on the inside and the outside of your home because a mouse can squeeze through an opening as small as a dime.
- One pair of mice can produce over 15,000 offspring a year. You can keep rodent populations low by continually setting traps inside and outside your home.
- Keep baits and traps out of reach of children and pets.
- Natural predators also help control rodent populations in the wild.

What should you do if you find a dead animal?

- If you find a dead animal, spray it and any nesting materials with disinfectant before moving it. This reduces the risk of exposure to deadly viruses.
- Use protective measures when moving the carcass and dispose of the animal according to local regulations.

- Remember to wash your hands afterwards.
- If your home is infested with rodents, contact animal control authorities.

What precautions should you take against ticks and mosquitoes?

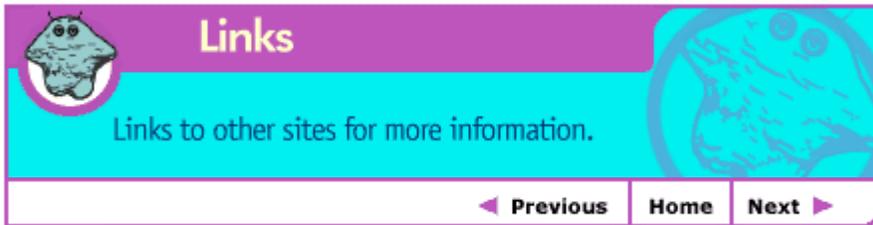
In wooded areas and high grass, take extra precautions against ticks and mosquitoes.

- It helps to wear light-colored clothing that covers as much exposed skin as possible.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET.
- Carefully check yourself and your family for ticks. Use tweezers to remove them.

What should you do if you are bitten or scratched by a wild animal?

- Apply first aid treatment as quickly as possible, and
- Immediately notify your health care provider.

Wild animals can carry fatal diseases and we have to keep them out of our homes. But we also need to take certain precautions with those endearing pets that we enjoy close at hand.



Hand Washing

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Most experts agree that the best way to prevent the spread of germs in the child care setting is good hand washing by child care providers, children, and others. Some activities in particular expose children and providers to germs or the opportunity to spread them. You can stop the spread of germs by washing your hands and teaching the children in your care good hand washing practices.

Food

[The U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) / Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) Foodborne Illness Education Information Center](#)

Information about food borne illness prevention for educators, trainers, and organizations developing education and training materials for food workers and consumers.

(www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodborne/foodborn.htm)

Immunization

[CDC's National Immunizations Program](#)

Information on immunizations for adults and children; vaccine recommendations; special educational resources for educators

(www.cdc.gov/nip)

Antibiotics

CDC's Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases: Antibiotic Resistance
(www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/antibioticresistance/default.htm)

Pets

Humane Society of the United States: Pet Care
(www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/)

Wild Animals

CDC's Rabies Branch Web site
(www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies)
Humane Society of the United States: Wildlife
(www.hsus.org/wildlife/)