

“How To” Tips for Avoiding the Cold and Flu This Season

Source: Carondelet Health Network’s Monica Fontes,
Infection Control

Now that cold and flu season has arrived, Carondelet Health Network wants to remind children and adults that keeping their hands clean is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

There is an effective way to wash your hands:

- Use warm water.
- Rub your hands vigorously for 10-15 seconds.
- Pay special attention to the backs of your hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails.
- Rinse your hands completely under warm running water.
- Dry them with a clean towel.
- Then use that towel to turn off the tap (which you originally turned on with potentially dirty hands).
- If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based gels and hand wipes are good alternatives.

Even hands that appear to be clean may be carrying germs and microorganisms that can make you ill.

Everyone should wash his or her hands:

- Before eating
- After being outdoors
- After playing with pets
- After using the bathroom
- After blowing his/her nose

Tips for parents of school-aged children:

- One of the most germ-filled surfaces in the classroom is the community pencil sharpener, according to Dr. Charles Gerba, UA. He recommends sending your child to school with mechanical pencils.
- Check with the teacher to make certain tabletops and desktops are being cleaned as well as all community toys.
- Send your child to school with facial tissues that prevent the spread of cold and flu viruses.
- Children should not borrow crayons. If possible, each child should have his or her own. All objects passed from one child to another are potentially germ carriers.

Some other tips:

- In office environments, clean shared equipment like photocopiers, fax machines, computers and telephone at least once a day and twice daily if heavily used and if someone in the office is ill.
- Always clean the shopping cart handle when headed into the grocery or department store.