

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Infection Control in the Home – Standard Precautions

Controlling the spread of infectious germs around the house doesn't have to be an overwhelming task. Following some simple rules can drastically cut the chance of illness:

**Prevent cross-contamination.** Use a different implement (broom, mop, sponges) for each cleaning task in the kitchen and bathroom.

**Disinfect cutting boards after each use.** And use separate cutting boards: one for vegetables and fruits, and one exclusively for meats. Or, mark each side of one board: one side for vegetables and fruits, the other side for raw meats.

**Replace sponges frequently.** Sponges and scrubbers provide the warm, moist conditions and trapped food particles on which bacteria thrive. Bacteria multiply rapidly, increasing from a few to millions in a matter of hours. Between uses, clean sponges with an antibacterial cleaning product and let air dry or microwave a *wet*, not dry, sponge for two minutes.

**Empty the vacuum.** Dangerous organisms, such as *Salmonella*, could be multiplying in the vacuum cleaner bag, waiting to be released into the air every time you vacuum. Bagless vacs should be emptied after every use. For vacs with collection bags, empty at least monthly.

**Disinfect the garbage can.** Germs that grow in your garbage can don't

always stay there. It's common for plastic liners to leak, allowing waste to collect in the bottom of the can or bin. Then, when someone empties the container and sets the bag on the floor, counter, or chair, bacteria spread to that surface, as well as to his or her hands. Clean and disinfect the garbage can weekly and use anti-bacterial bags.



**Clean the can opener.** That little bit of juice or food left on the blade after you open a can invites bacterial growth.

**Change the towels.** The average person sheds 1 million skin cells an hour. Bath towels harbor those cells and their bacteria, and can serve as a terry-cloth Petrie dish if they're folded and left in a damp bathroom. Hang towels unfolded to let them air dry, and replace them with clean towels after three uses.

**Protect your toothbrush.** Every time an open toilet is flushed, a fine mist of fecal matter and bacteria sprays 20 feet in the air. Keep your toothbrush in a drawer or cabinet. You should also sanitize your toothbrush daily by soaking it in peroxide or antibacterial mouthwash. Even though the germs on your toothbrush are your own, they can multiply to enormous numbers between uses.

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## Clean Hands Are Healthy Hands

**Wash your hands.** It's the single *most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.*

We all should know the importance of washing after using the toilet, yet less than 50 percent of people actually do it—and almost no one does it properly.

**Wash your hands frequently.** Always after toileting, after handling raw foods, whenever you've been in contact with anything or anyone "suspicious," and periodically throughout the day. Our bodies naturally carry germs. Most of these germs are harmless, and some are even essential to our health!

However, germs from other sources, such as raw meat, can also survive on hands, and these can be easily transferred to other surfaces, increasing the risk of cross-contamination. Because our hands are in frequent contact with our eyes, nose, and mouth, it's easy to see how dirty hands spread germs and illnesses, everything from the common cold, to the flu, to food poisoning.

**Wash for at least 20 seconds**—about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" through twice. Rub hands together vigorously and scrub between fingers and under nails. It's even a good idea to lather, rinse, and repeat.

As important as it is to properly wash your hands, it's equally important to **dry them correctly** too. The bacteria and viruses that are left on your hands after even a good washing thrive on moist skin, so until you dry your hands thoroughly after each wash, you can't prevent germs from spreading.

Hot-air hand dryers aren't necessarily the best way to dry hands, primarily because most people give up before their hands are really dry. Wiping your still-damp hands on your clothes is a no-no! Researchers found that the most effective way of reducing hand-borne bacteria is to dry thoroughly washed hands on clean paper towels.

Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should *not replace* hand washing. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. Hand sanitizers can build up on skin, so wash your hands the regular way—with soap and warm water—after every fourth use.

Source: WebMD; Centers for Disease Control



## Dementia Care Hand Washing

Hand-washing is almost always an issue in dementia. Guide the person in your care to the sink and tell her step-by-step how to wash her hands. Explain to her what you are going to do next. Watch the flow of water so it is not too strong, as it can be frightening for a person with dementia.

## Taking Care of Yourself—Handling Soiled Laundry

As a caregiver you are around a lot of soiled laundry. Stay safe—Always use latex gloves when handling soiled laundry. Carry dirty linens away from your body.

Never shake soiled linens. (Germs may contaminate the floor and be spread throughout the house on the soles of shoes.) Use a

leak-proof plastic bag, tied shut, for linen that contains body fluids or waste. Bag soiled laundry in the same place where it is

used. Wash soiled linen separately from other clothes. Fill the machine with hot water, add 1/4 cup bleach and detergent, rinse

twice, and then dry. Clean the washer by running it through a cycle with one-cup bleach or other disinfectant. Remember, wash

your hands before going on to another task!



## Live Life Laughing!

Do you know who can help me write a book about Halloween?

A ghostwriter.



## Inspiration

*It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship, that makes unhappy marriages.*

– Friedrich Nietzsche

## Memory Care - Holiday Visits

If a loved one with Alzheimer's lives in a nursing home or assisted-living facility, and you'd like him or her to spend some holiday time with you at home, test the waters first with a short visit before the actual holiday bustle starts. Being removed from familiar surroundings can be disorienting and upsetting.

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## SAFETY TIPS—Sepsis Is a Common Cause of Hospital Deaths

Sepsis, a life-threatening response to infection, is a common cause of deaths in hospitals, according to a new report. Symptoms of sepsis include chills or fever, extreme pain or discomfort, clammy or sweaty skin, confusion or disorientation, shortness of breath and a high heart rate. If you are concerned a loved one may have sepsis, seek care immediately, and ask the doctor, “Could it be sepsis?” If you are concerned the person in your care may have sepsis, seek care immediately.

Source: *New York Times* February 21, 2019

**Flu Facts** Once you develop flu symptoms, you're contagious for up to one week. You can even pass the virus on to others before you begin to ache or sniffle since you're contagious about a day before you notice symptoms. The germs can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours—so clean frequently touched items such as doorknobs, tables, and cabinet handles with disinfectant. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If they aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Source: *Berkeley Wellness*