

## How are Germs and Illnesses Shared

Germs and illnesses are shared from person to person by direct contact, indirect contact, droplet transmission and airborne transmission.

### Direct contact

Direct contact transmission requires close contact with an infected person and usually occurs between members of the same household, close friends and family members.

### Indirect Contact

Indirect contact transmission involves inanimate objects called fomites. Fomites are the objects (i.e. copy machine, door handles, tabletops, faucet handles) contaminated by an infected individual. Transmission occurs indirectly when you touch the contaminated object and then touch your eyes, nose, mouth and then you become infected. Germs can survive for prolonged periods of time on the following types of surfaces: door knobs, door handles, handrails, tables, beds, chairs, washroom surfaces, cups, dishes, cutlery, computer keyboards, mice, electronic devices, office supplies and children's toys.



### Droplet Transmission

Droplet transmission occurs when an ill person coughs, sneezes, speaks or exhales. Droplets can travel distances up to 6 feet and possibly enter your eyes, nose or mouth. This is how the flu, colds, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and many other viruses spread.

### Airborne Transmission

Airborne transmission occurs when tiny pathogens that can be carried by dust, become suspended in the air and are widely dispersed by air currents. These tiny pathogens can be airborne for long periods of time. With airborne transmission, direct contact is not needed to spread. In fact, most airborne diseases are contracted when someone breathes in "infected air". Examples of airborne diseases include: influenza, the common cold, whooping cough, tuberculosis and meningitis.

## How Can You Protect Yourself and Others?

Because illnesses can spread through direct or indirect contact, everyone is at risk for various illnesses. You are at a higher risk of becoming ill when you're around sick people or in areas susceptible to germs.



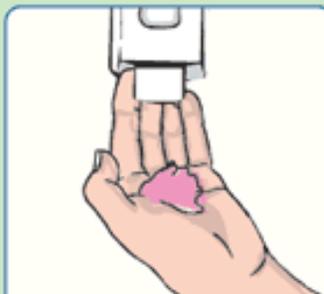
You can protect yourself and those around you by:

- Frequently and thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water vigorously for at least **20 seconds**.
- If you can't wash your hands, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your nose, eyes, or mouth. The average adult does this about 16 times an hour.
- Use disinfecting wipes on commonly shared items. Doing this reduces the concentration of viruses by 99%. Wipe down your desk and phones once a day. If using someone else's phone, wipe it down first.
- Avoid handshakes and hugs. You can avoid handshaking by making a light joke of it by commenting "In honor of flu season, I'm giving fist bumps."
- Most importantly, *stay home if you are sick*. While everyone wants to appear indispensable, there is no excuse for going to work and infecting everyone.

## FIGHT GERMS BY WASHING YOUR HANDS!



**1** Wet your hands



**2** Soap



**3** Lather and scrub - 20 sec



**4** Rinse - 10 sec



**5** Turn off tap



**6** Dry your hands

### DONT FORGET TO WASH:

- between your fingers
- under your nails
- the tops of your hands