



FACT SHEET

Disease Prevention

for Parents and Childcare Providers

Avoiding Disease from other People

Children get sick from many different sources. However, the most common source of disease is other people. Children are considered a “high-risk” group or “highly susceptible population”. This means that they get sick more often and more easily than adults. They have a higher risk for more severe illness, complications, and sometimes even death. Infants usually have the highest risk. With this in mind, it is worth taking a few special steps to prevent illness in our homes and daycares.

How Disease is Transmitted

- Microorganisms (germs) are secreted in *mucous* from our nose and eyes, and in *saliva, urine, feces, and blood*.
- These germs are then transferred directly to another person, to surfaces, or put into the air from coughing, sneezing, or vomiting.
- We become infected when disease-causing organisms reach our nose, eyes, or mouth from contact with airborne droplets or aerosols, or when we touch our nose, eyes, or mouth after touching someone who is sick, or after touching contaminated surfaces.

Many of these organisms can survive on our hands and on surfaces for long periods of time.

Germs that are secreted in feces and urine get on people’s hands when they do not wash their hands well enough after using the bathroom. These germs can then be spread around on surfaces or directly to other people. They reach our mouth if we don’t wash our hands before eating, or if we touch contaminated surfaces and then touch our mouth. Children are often associated with disease that is transmitted via the fecal-oral route because they often put their hands in their mouth without washing their hands first.

Hand Washing

Many studies have shown that by far the best way to keep from getting sick is to wash our hands often and at the right times. Teach children how and when to wash their hands, and make arrangements so that hand washing is easy to do in your home or childcare setting. The best choice for cleaning is any kind of soap and warm water. Hand sanitizer may be used in addition to, but not as a replacement for, hand washing.

Over ⇒

Teach children to wash their hands:

- After coughing, blowing or wiping their nose
- After putting their hands in their mouth
- After using the bathroom
- Before eating
- After playing outside
- Before preparing food
- After touching animals

If possible, teach children not to put their hands in their mouth, nose, or eyes.

If there are infants in your household, wash hands prior to holding or feeding the infant or handling the infant's hands and toys (these go in their mouth).

Staying Home

It is extremely important to keep children home when they are sick. This protects other children and babies in our community against disease. Besides, it is better for the sick child and he or she will recuperate faster.

Surfaces

- Clean toys and surfaces that people touch with their hands at least once a week.
- If people in the house are sick, clean these more often, sometimes several times a day.
- Clean toys or surfaces immediately if someone sneezes, coughs, or vomits on them.

Cleaning will cut down on the number of germs that are hanging around to be picked up on everyone's hands. Soap and water work well for cleaning, or use cleaners that contain sanitizers. Use cleaners according to the manufacturer's directions.

Please contact the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department at (406) 447-8352 with any questions.