

Healthy Hands at Work

Being sick at work is everyone's business



WORKER HANDBOOK



HANDWASHING



Make sure plain soap and water are available at your workplace and where you eat!

When to wash your hands

- Before eating or preparing food
- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose
- After handling shared objects
- Before handling contact lenses

How to wash your hands

1. Wet your hands.
2. Apply plain soap. Avoid antibacterial soap.
3. Rub your palms, between your fingers, backs of hands, wrists, thumbs, fingertips and nails. This takes about 20 seconds.
4. Rinse for 10 seconds or until all soap is gone.
5. Dry your hands with a clean disposable towel.
6. Use the towel to turn off the tap and let yourself out the door.

Use plain soap. Antibacterial soap does not work any better than plain soap in preventing infections. Antibacterial soap contains triclosan, a chemical that can cause antibiotic resistance.

When to use a hand sanitizer

- Use hand sanitizers only when soap and water are unavailable.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers only work if your hands are not dirty or greasy.
- When soap and water are not available and your hands are dirty or greasy, use a cleansing hand wipe (not antibacterial or disinfecting) followed by an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers

Only alcohol-based hand sanitizers are recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

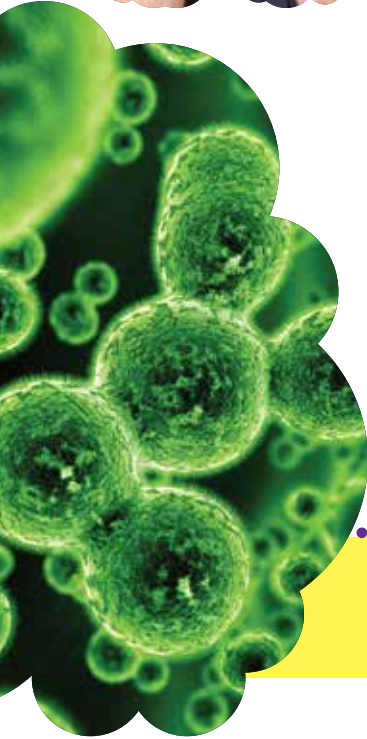
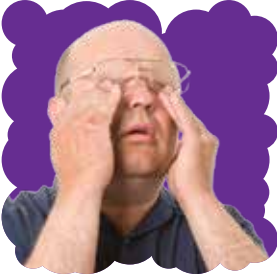
- Select hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol (ethanol, propanol or n-propanol) as the only active ingredient.
- Foaming or liquid gels are both effective.

Non-alcohol based hand sanitizers are not recommended. The active ingredient in these products is benzalkonium chloride, a chemical that can lead to antibiotic resistance.

In the workplace, hand sanitizers are not a substitute for handwashing. Routine handwashing is needed to remove the dirt and grease that keep hand sanitizers from working.



PREVENTING INFECTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE



Keep your hands clean and away from your face

- 80% of respiratory tract infections can be spread by the hands.
- Your hands can pick up germs from work surfaces and from items you share with co-workers.
- When you touch the inside of your nose, eyes or mouth with your hands, germs can get into the body to cause infection.

Handwashing is the best way to stop the spread of infections.



Annual influenza (flu) immunization

- Protect yourself from influenza (flu) by getting an annual vaccination.
- Influenza can make you sick for 7-10 days and can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia.

Respiratory etiquette

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough to avoid spreading germs in the air.
- If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Throw away used tissues promptly.



Other things you can do

- Don't share food items, eating utensils, coffee cups, drinking glasses.
- Don't share cigarettes if you smoke. If you smoke, try to quit. Smoking is a health risk for respiratory infections.
- Don't share personal care items such as lip balm or cosmetics.
- Clean workspaces and objects that are shared with co-workers.



RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

Symptoms

Depending on what part of your respiratory tract is infected, symptoms can include:

- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Fever
- Loss of voice
- Ear pain
- Facial pain
- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Body aches

More serious symptoms are:

- Chest pain
- Shaking chills
- Shortness of breath

Self care

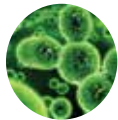
What can you do to feel better if you have a respiratory tract infection?

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Take fever-reducing medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever and pain.
- Use cough medicine to allow sleep and rest.
- Decongestants may help if you have a stuffy nose.
- Ask your pharmacist for help with over-the-counter medications.

What's making me sick?

Viral infections. Most respiratory tract infections are caused by viruses. Viral infections can make you just as sick as infections caused by bacteria. Viral infections are more contagious than bacterial infections, so if more than one person in your family has the same illness, it is most likely a viral infection.

Bacterial infections. Bacterial infections are less common than viral infections and don't spread as easily from one person to another.



Do I need an antibiotic?

- Antibiotics work against bacterial infections but not against viral infections.
- Your doctor may do tests to find out if your infection is caused by bacteria.
- Avoid unneeded use of antibiotics and possible side effects that may occur when you take antibiotics.
- Inappropriate use of antibiotics can cause bacteria to become resistant to antibiotics, so that antibiotics no longer work.
- You can carry antibiotic resistant bacteria in your body for a long time, which can result in infections later on that are difficult to treat.
- Antibiotics need to be used responsibly.



What causes these infections?

Infection	Caused by Bacteria	Caused by Viruses	Will an antibiotic help?
Colds	None	All	No
Influenza (flu)	None	All	No*
Sore throat	Rarely	Most	Rarely
Laryngitis	None	All	No
Bronchitis**	Rarely	Most	Rarely
Sinus infection	Rarely	Most	Rarely
Ear infection	Some	Some	Sometimes
Pneumonia	Often	Some	Usually

* Antivirals do exist and are recommended in certain situations.

** In otherwise healthy people

RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS



When to stay home

- If you are not feeling well enough to work, stay home.
- If you have influenza (flu), stay home until you are feeling better and avoid going out except to seek medical attention.
- Ask your occupational health nurse, family physician or nurse practitioner whether your symptoms indicate you should stay home from work.
- Call your provincial health line for health information and advice about symptoms, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Know the number for your provincial health line and keep the number handy.

When to seek immediate medical attention



Go to the emergency department if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Trouble breathing not caused by a stuffy nose
- Stiff neck or severe headache with fever and chills



It usually takes about a week to get over a viral respiratory infection, but sometimes it takes as long as three weeks to fully recover.

WHAT IS ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE?

Antibiotics are medications that can kill bacteria or stop them from multiplying.

Antibiotic resistance is the ability of bacteria to withstand the effects of an antibiotic.

Antibiotic resistance is a threat to your health

- Infections caused by resistant bacteria are difficult to treat.
- Antibiotic resistant infections can lead to prolonged illness and hospitalization.
- Some antibiotic resistant infections are impossible to treat.



Use antibiotics wisely

- Unnecessary use of antibiotics leads to antibiotic resistance.
- When you have an infection and are not prescribed an antibiotic, it is because your infection is most likely caused by a virus.
- If you are prescribed an antibiotic, take all of the medication as directed even if you are feeling better before it is finished.
- Use soaps and cleaning products that do not lead to antibiotic resistance.

About half of the antibiotics prescribed for respiratory tract infections are inappropriate because most of these infections are caused by viruses.

Wise use of antibiotics is everyone's responsibility.

It is the bacteria that are resistant, not you. Even if you have never taken an antibiotic, you can get an antibiotic resistant infection from someone else.

CLEANERS AND DISINFECTANTS

Cleaners

- Plain cleaning products remove germs, and the dirt and grime that attract germs, by washing them away.
- **Use for routine cleaning of shared workplace surfaces** such as computer keyboards, telephones, refrigerator door handles, steering wheels, tools and other frequently handled objects.
- Plain cleaning agents do not lead to antibiotic resistance.
- **Avoid antibacterial products containing triclosan** because they do not work any better than plain cleaning agents and triclosan can lead to antibiotic resistance.

Disinfectants

- Disinfectants kill 99.9% of germs if used according to instructions. **Improper use can lead to antibiotic resistance** in the germs that are not killed.
- **Use for cleaning up body fluids** (blood, vomit, sputum, urine or feces) or places where this contamination might be found, such as washrooms.
- Food preparation and handling surfaces should be disinfected according to provincial food services codes.
- Public health emergencies may require special disinfecting procedures.
- Instructions for disinfecting wipes state that the surface must remain wet for several minutes. This is often difficult to achieve and can lead to reduced germ kill and increased antibiotic resistance. These products are not recommended.
- Do not use disinfecting wipes on the skin. They are only meant to be used on hard smooth surfaces.

Read the labels.
Avoid antibacterial products containing triclosan. When disinfection is needed, use the product according to instructions.

UNDERSTANDING PRODUCT LABELS

SOAPS AND CLEANING AGENTS

RECOMMENDED

INGREDIENTS: AQUA (WATER), SODIUM LARYL SULFATE, COCAMIDE DEA, COCAMIDOPROPYL BETANE, GLYCERIN, ALOE BARBADENSIS GEL, TOCOPHERYL ACETATE (VITAMIN E), CITRIC ACID, SODIUM CHLORIDE, SODIUM CITRATE, BENZOPHENONE-4, METHYLSOTHAZOLINONE, PARFUM (FRAGRANCE), EXT.VIOLET 2 (CI 60730)

Use plain soap and cleaners that do not contain triclosan

NOT RECOMMENDED

Drug Facts

Active ingredient	Purpose
Triclosan 0.10%.....	Antibacterial hand soap

Avoid antibacterial soaps and cleaners containing triclosan

HAND SANITIZERS

RECOMMENDED

~~ACTIVE INGREDIENT/INGRÉDIENT ACTIF:~~
DENATURED ETHANOL 62% W/W OTHER INGREDIENTS/
AUTRES INGRÉDIENTS: AGUA, OLETH-20, CARBOMER, PARFUM,
AMINOMETHYLPROPANOL, ALOE BARBADENSIS LEAF EXTRACT

Use hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol (ethanol, propanol, n-propanol) as the only active ingredient

NOT RECOMMENDED

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS/INGRÉDIENTS ACTIF :
Benzalkonium Chloride 0.15% w/w

INACTIVE INGREDIENTS/AUTRES INGRÉDIENTS :
Aqua, Polysorbate 20, Aloe Barbadensis, Parfum

Do not use hand sanitizers that contain benzalkonium chloride

DISINFECTANTS

USE ONLY AS DIRECTED

If surfaces are visibly dirty, clean first. To disinfect: Dilute 250 ml per 4 litres of water. Apply with sponge or mop. All surfaces should be thoroughly wet. Let stand 10 minutes, then wipe dry. Rinse all food preparation areas with potable water. Use a fresh bucket of solution every time you clean. Wear rubber gloves if you have sensitive skin. Kills germs on hard non-porous surfaces.

Use disinfectants at the right concentration and for the right length of time

DISINFECTING WIPES

USE ONLY AS DIRECTED

To Disinfect: Kills bacteria on hard, non-porous surfaces. Wipe surface to be disinfected. Allow surface to remain wet for 10 minutes before use. Let surface dry. No need to rinse. For highly-soiled surfaces, clean excess dirt first. In food preparation areas, wash disinfected surfaces with potable water before allowing contact with food.

Disinfecting wipes can be difficult to use as directed. Use disinfecting wipes only when they can be used as directed. Disinfecting wipes should not be used on the skin.

Being sick at work
is everyone's business



- Lost productivity
- Increased sick time
- Increased benefit use
- Replacement worker time
- Workplace fatigue / distraction
- Spread of infections to co-workers
- Bringing germs home to your family

Make Healthy Hands part
of your everyday life

- Self-care for respiratory infections
- Handwashing videos
- Games

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