



The Flu: Stop the Spread

You — yes, you! — can help keep people from getting sick this flu season. How? It's not too hard. Just take these steps:

- Get the flu vaccine.
- Wash your hands often, especially before eating and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Keep your sneezes and coughs to yourself (use a tissue or your elbow instead of your hand).
- Keep your hands out of your eyes, mouth, and nose.

Mom's Always Right

You may have heard all this before — probably from your mom — but flu season is a great time to actually start doing them. By following these tips, you might be able to keep yourself from getting sick and prevent germs from spreading around and making other people sick.

Do you notice something about all three of the tips above? All of them involve your hands. That's how a lot of germs get in our bodies in the first place — whether it's a cold, chickenpox, or the flu. Germs get on our hands and we put our hands in our eyes, noses, and, especially, our mouths.

Sometimes you just can't help it. You have to pick up your sandwich, floss your teeth, and do stuff like that. Our hands get plenty of opportunities to touch our eyes and noses, too. Don't even get me started on nose-picking. I think you can guess that you shouldn't be doing that during flu season either (or anytime — ew!)

Check Your Hand-Washing Skills

The best habit of all these good habits is hand washing. When you wash your hands, you rinse away germs that you might have picked up here or there. When you do this before you eat, for instance, you reduce the chance that those germs will end up in your body, where they can make you sick.

Sure, you know how to wash your hands. But check your technique against these recommendations:

1. Use warm water (not cold or hot) when you wash your hands.
2. Use whatever soap you like. Some soaps come in cool shapes and colors or smell nice, but whatever kind that gets you scrubbing is the kind you should use. Antibacterial soaps are OK to use, but regular soap works fine.
3. Work up some lather on both sides of your hands, your wrists, and between your fingers. Don't forget to wash around your nails. This is one place germs like to hide. Wash for about 15 to 20 seconds — about how long it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" two times.
4. Rinse and dry well with a clean towel.

Let's add a final step 5 since it's flu season: Tell a friend to wash up, too!

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