

Dodging the bugs:

a quick guide to infection control at work and home

Battling an invisible enemy such as the bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi that cause infectious diseases can be intimidating—and even a little scary.

There are two main ways that people are exposed to infectious diseases:

Person to person. Communicable diseases, such as seasonal influenza or colds, are primarily transmitted by sneezing, coughing, and inadequate handwashing. Communicable diseases also include Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, which are spread through contact with blood and other bodily fluids.

By living creatures or objects. So-called “vector-borne diseases” include the West Nile virus, which is transmitted by mosquitos, and Lyme disease, which is spread by ticks. Tetanus is transmitted through a puncture wound from a sharp, dirty object, such as a rusty nail.

What to do?

First, keep in mind that just because you are exposed to an infectious disease, you are not necessarily going to get sick.

Next, don't worry. As with any exposure, there are simple things you and your company can do to stay healthy.



Preventing communicable diseases

For the environment:

- Provide handwashing facilities and/or waterless hand cleaner. (Note that waterless hand cleaner is not effective in killing germs that cause diarrhea.)
- Regularly wipe down common surfaces, such as door knobs, telephone handsets, and keyboards. Dispose of soiled tissues immediately.
- Disinfect areas contaminated by blood and other body fluids.
- Brush up on fatigue management and stress management programs.
- Provide healthy food and beverages at gatherings and promptly refrigerate leftovers.
- Encourage people to stay home when ill, and have policies in place that support them in doing so. The Centers for Disease Control recommends staying home until 24 hours after vomiting has stopped, or fever is gone without the use of a fever reducer.

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For the individual:

- Wash your hands with soap and water—long enough to sing *Happy Birthday* twice.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, or into a facial tissue that is immediately discarded.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick; staying 3 feet away is a good rule of thumb.
- Avoid handshakes during flu season.
- Cover open wounds.
- Keep your work area and home clean.
- Get vaccinated as recommended.

Preventing vector-borne diseases

For the environment:

- Assess risks and provide information on potential vector-borne illnesses.
- Use good pest management practices.
- Provide EPA-registered insect repellent and appropriate insecticides, and train on proper use.
- Treat clothing and personal items with appropriate insecticides.

For the individual:

- Avoid high-risk areas and peak biting hours (dusk and dawn).
- Use insect repellent as directed.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks.
- Check yourself for ticks; request assistance for hard-to-see areas.
- Seek medical attention if bites become infected or if other diseases are suspected.
- Get vaccinated as recommended.



Final thoughts

Stay healthy by getting good sleep and plenty of exercise. Don't use tobacco products. Nourish your body with wholesome food and beverages. Minimize stress.

Want to know more?

Find a directory of county health departments in Oregon:

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/ProviderPartnerResources/LocalHealthDepartmentResources/Pages/lhd.aspx>

The Oregon Health Authority acute and communicable disease prevention section:

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/Directory/Pages/Program.aspx?pid=12>

Adult vaccine schedule:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/adult/adult-schedule.pdf>

Information on bloodborne pathogens:

<http://osha.oregon.gov/Pages/topics/bloodborne-pathogens.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control:

Ticks: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>

Mosquitoes: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/stopmosquitoes/index.html>

Rodent control (Hantavirus): <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/>