



## Frequently asked questions about Limiting communicable disease through proper hygiene

**From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

Educators as well as parents can help slow the spread of colds and flu and other diseases spread by person to person contact with the following suggestions.

### **Always remind children (and adults) to:**

- **Cover their nose and mouth** with a tissue when they cough or sneeze—have them throw the tissue away after they use it.
- **Wash their hands often with soap and water**, especially after they cough or sneeze. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Remind them to not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way

### **Remind children and care providers to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rubs, and make sure that supplies are available.**

- Encourage care providers and children to use soap and water to wash hands when hands are visibly soiled, or an alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water are not available
- Encourage care providers to wash their hands to the extent possible between contacts with infants and children, such as before meals or feedings, after wiping the child's nose or mouth, after touching objects such as tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nose drainage, after diaper changes, and after assisting a child with toileting.
- Encourage care providers to wash the hands of infants and toddlers when the hands become soiled.
- Encourage children to wash hands when their hands have become soiled. Teach children to wash hands for 15-20 seconds (long enough for children to sing their ABC's).
- Keep alcohol-based hand rubs out of the reach of children to prevent unsupervised use.

### **Keep the child care environment clean and make sure that supplies are available.**

- Clean frequently touched surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled.
- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Always follow label instructions when using any EPA-registered disinfectant. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.
- Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children.

### **Remind children and care providers to cover their noses and mouths when sneezing or coughing.**

- Advise children and care providers to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and to put their used tissue in a waste basket.
- Make sure that tissues are available in all nurseries, child care rooms, and common areas such as reading rooms, classrooms, and rooms where meals are provided.

- Encourage care providers and children to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub as soon as possible, if they have sneezed or coughed on their hands.

**Observe all children for symptoms of respiratory illness, especially when there is increased influenza in the community.**

- Observe closely, all infants and children for symptoms of respiratory illness. Notify the parent if a child develops a fever (100°F. or higher under the arm, 101°F. orally, or 102°F. rectally) and chills, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches. Send the child home, if possible, and advise the parent to contact the child's doctor.

**Encourage parents of sick children to keep their children home. Encourage sick care providers to stay home.**

- Encourage parents of sick children to keep the children home and away from the child care setting until the children have been without fever for 24 hours, to prevent spreading illness to others. Similarly, encourage sick care providers to stay home.

**Consult your local health department when increases in respiratory illness occur in a child care or school setting.**

- Consult with your local or state health department for recommendations to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.

**For more information about the flu and other important health information, visit us on the web**

[www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)

**Or call your local Health Department office at:**

**Coldwater**  
279-9561 x 143

**Hillsdale**  
437-7395 x 107

**Sturgis**  
659-4013 x 109

**Three Rivers**  
273-2161 x 241