

According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control), the single most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands.

Infectious diseases, many of which are spread by unclean hands, remain the leading cause of serious disease worldwide. These diseases can be caused by both viruses and bacteria, for example colds, the flu, stomach “bugs” causing vomiting and diarrhea, and even Staph infections.

Leading health authorities agree that hand washing is the simplest; most effect thing people can do to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Washing hands with soap and clean water for 20 seconds is a sensible strategy for hand hygiene. If soap and clean water are not available, an alcohol-based hand hygiene product (for example Germ-X) is recommended.

Colds

According to the CDC, there are more than 52 million cases of the common cold each year among Americans under the age of 17. Nearly 22 million school days are lost due to the common cold alone. Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to 2 hours or more on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

Children have about 6-10 colds a year, according to the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases. One important reason colds are so common in children is because they are often in close contact with each other in daycare centers and schools. Adults average 2-4 colds a year.

Flu

The CDC estimates that 10-20 percent of Americans come down with the flu during each flu season, which typically lasts from November to March. Children are two to three times more likely to get the flu than adults, and more frequently spread the virus to others.

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," is a bacterium that is commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. While approximately 30% of the population is colonized with staph, approximately 1% is colonized with MRSA, a type of staph that is resistant to penicillin.

MRSA is a type of “Staph” bacteria that can cause skin infections that may look like spider bites, infected turf burns, impetigo, boils or abscesses. It is spread by touching the infection/drainage or by touching surfaces that have come in contact with the infection/drainage. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with alternative antibiotics.

The public seems to be bombarded with information about a different illness/disease on a fairly regular basis, at the present time it is MRSA. However, the key to prevention of most infectious diseases and to stop the transmission to others, no matter what the cause, again comes down to frequent hand washing and good personal hygiene.

Other measures that can help you in your battle against germs include: Getting plenty of sleep, eating a healthy diet, cleaning/disinfecting surfaces in your home and car on a regular basis, keeping all cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed, using a skin moisturizer to prevent skin from cracking, and not sharing any personal items with other people.

REMEMBER: AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

