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Tackling Colds and Flu **Keeping germs in check**

This year, with flu vaccines in short supply, it's more important than ever for everyone to take steps to avoid spreading germs, says The Soap and Detergent Association. Here's more about colds and flu and how to combat them.

The Dreaded "Droplet Spread"

The major culprit in spreading cold and flu germs is an unappetizing syndrome called "droplet spread." Tiny particles from the cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. These droplets can also land on a desk, countertop, doorknob, or other common surface. If you touch that surface, then touch your eyes, mouth, or nose before washing your hands, those germs can invade your body! To make matters worse, some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on many surfaces.

Take Cover

When a cough or sneeze shows up, keep those droplets under control. Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw it away. If there's no tissue in reach, "give your cough the shoulder." Lift your shoulder and arm and cough into your upper/arm shoulder. The idea is that people are less likely to touch each other's shoulders than each other's hands. Or, cover your mouth or nose with your hands. But no matter what cover-up you use, promptly wash your hands.

Clean Up

As a major deterrent to the spread of germs, use soap! When paired with the proper handwashing technique, it's one of the best ways to protect yourself from cold and flu germs. Here's how to do it:

- Wet hands with warm water and apply liquid, bar, or powder soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously for the amount of time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Rinse hands well under warm running water.
- Dry hands with a paper towel or air dryer.

If there's no soap and water nearby, use an alcohol-based, disposable hand wipe or a hand sanitizer.

Exercise Good Habits

During cold and flu season, time-honored ways to stay healthy apply! Get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly, drink plenty of water, and eat a balanced diet. These activities can help your immune system better resist the germs that cause illness.

News Flash

Super Bowl Buffet

Winning tips to keep germs from scoring a touchdown

Hosting a Super Bowl buffet? The pre-game activity in your kitchen means plenty of opportunity for germs and bacteria to score, especially those that foster foodborne illness. With germs on the offense, good cleaning practices are your best defense. These play-by-play tips from The Soap and Detergent Association will help keep germs on the run.

The Game Plan

Disinfect the playing field. Use a disinfectant cleaning product to keep germs under control on countertops, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils. Don't neglect the turf under your feet. Kitchen floors are a good breeding ground for germs. A variety of new and improved floor products are perfect for quick pre-company cleanup.

Throw in the towel. Instead of cloth towels, use paper towels for drying your hands and cleaning up spills. Toss the paper towel away, along with the germs!

Send in replacements. Sponges, dishcloths, and dishtowels soak up germs, as well as dirt and spills. Have clean ones on hand for frequent changes. Once the party's over, launder them using hot water and chlorine bleach (if safe for the fabric). To disinfect synthetic sponges, carefully mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of chlorine bleach with one gallon of water. Soak the sponge for five minutes, rinse, and air dry.

Remember the supporting players. It's flu season, which means that extra germs may tag along with your guests. Light switches, doorknobs, faucet handles, drawer pulls, and other surfaces that everybody touches are great places for germs to linger and breed. For quick, frequent cleaning, keep disinfectant

wipes within easy reach, particularly in the kitchen and bathroom. Also use them for cleaning up spills as they happen.

Keep soap on the sidelines. Be sure there's a good supply of hand soap and disposable hand towels at every sink. When it comes to stopping the spread of germs, frequent handwashing is in a league of its own!

Soft Lights... Soft Music... Tough Stains
Kiss Valentine's Day stains goodbye!

Dining by candlelight... cuddling by the fire... toasting the miracle of love. When the day ends, it's the memories you want to save, not the stains that tagged along. In honor of Cupid's big day, The Soap and Detergent Association shares ways to kiss those pesky stains goodbye!

Love notes for the romantic couple

Lip balm & lipstick. A touch of passion leaves its mark. The kiss-off: Remove the stain by pretreating with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent, then wash in warm water. Line or air dry. If the stain remains, repeat the procedure. Use chlorine bleach in the wash, if it's safe for the fabric.

Chocolate. Yesterday's aphrodisiac is today's stain. The kiss-off: Pretreat with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent, or a paste of granular laundry detergent and water. Launder the item in warm water. If the stain remains, rewash using a bleach that's safe for the fabric.

Beverages. All of Cupid's favorite libations - wine, soft drinks, coffee, and tea - have stain potential. The kiss-off: Soak or sponge stain in cool water. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Launder using a bleach that's safe for the fabric.

Perfume & cologne. Love lingers on! The kiss-off: Pretreat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Then launder.

Fireplace ashes. Even stoking the flames of love can cause stains. The kiss-off: Hold the fabric taut and vacuum off as much soot as possible. Sprinkle an absorbent powder, such as baking soda or talcum powder, on the stain. Let it stand for several minutes, then vacuum again. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Then launder.

Calendar of Clean

National Clean-Off-Your-Desk Day (January 10, 2005)

Mark this date on your calendar and make plans now to get rid of the clutter and clean your desk surface. According to research, "getting organized" shows up on most everyone's list of New Year's resolutions. If it appears on your list, here are some easy ways to help you keep this resolution.

- Clear the way. Get rid of items on your desk that you don't need.

- Home run. Find a home for the items you must keep and organize them.
- Clean up. Grab your favorite cleaning product to get rid of dust, dirt, crumbs, and other unwelcome guests that have found a home under the piles of paper!
- Get in the habit. Routinely clean your desk. This will make the task more manageable.

National Clean-off-Your Desk Day was founded by Anne Chase Moeller, daughter of the author of Chase's Annual Events.

Don't Be Caught Dirty-handed!

Hygiene tools at hand

Okay, it's cold and flu season. Somebody sneezes and everybody cringes! Wouldn't you like to know a more positive way to help ward off germs? Well, it's as simple as... *cleaning your hands*. No matter where you are, there's a way to get those hands clean, says The Soap and Detergent Association. All you need are the right tools!

Your Hand Cleaning Toolkit

Hand soaps. When paired with warm water, hand soap is an effective way to clean your hands. A simple 20-second scrub will do the job.

Hand sanitizers (gels or foams). These alcohol-based products are used without water and are effective in killing germs on hands. A dime-sized amount should be poured on the hands and rubbed over all surfaces until dry.

Disposable hand wipes. These are embedded with ingredients that help kill germs. Keep them in the glove compartment or stash them in a backpack, gym bag, or diaper bag for clean hands on-the-go.

Safe, Not Sorry!

Knowing what's dishwasher-friendly helps avoid post-party blues

The celebration's over, but the mess still lingers! While it's tempting to toss everything in the dishwasher, The Soap and Detergent Association reminds you that some of your favorite items may not be dishwasher-friendly.

Check the instructions. If you're in doubt about an item, check with the manufacturer to see if it's "dishwasher safe." Your dishwasher manual may also include some guidelines that will help.

No fear! The force and heat of the water can damage fragile pieces. For example, stemware may snap or etched designs can fade. Here are some items that you'll probably want to hand wash: aluminum utensils, cast iron, hand-painted or antique china, crystal, decorated glassware,

hollow-handled knives, milk glass, pewter, plastics, silver, and wooden items.

The Comfort Zone

Keeping comforters clean and cozy

Baby, it's cold outside! And, that means your comforters are doing extra duty – and getting extra dirty. Frequent use means frequent laundering, reminds The Soap and Detergent Association. Here's a guide to keeping comforters clean, cozy, and comfortable.

- Check the care instructions for any special requirements for comforters.
 - Pretreat heavily-soiled areas with a prewash soil and stain remover.
 - Set washer to high water level, delicate agitation, and normal spin. Add detergent, partially fill it with warm water, and stop the washer.
 - Put the comforter into the washer, then squish it down to submerge.
 - Turn washer back on, continue filling with water, and complete the wash cycle. Check occasionally to be sure the comforter is still completely submerged.
 - Tumble dry. Toss a few dry, clean towels in with your comforter to keep it from clumping. Periodically rearrange it so it dries evenly.
 - Launder monthly or more often if someone is severely allergic to dust mites.
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Cleaning Questions? ***Ask Nancy!***

Q: What's the best way to clean champagne glasses for Valentine's Day?

A: Check with the manufacturer to see if the glasses are "dishwasher safe."

If they are, wash them in the dishwasher. To prevent rings on glasses, leave enough space between each glass in the dish rack. Also, use a rinse agent to prevent spotting and buildup. Unless the manufacturer says otherwise, you'll probably want to hand wash crystal and decorated glassware.

Q: When I wash dishes by hand, will lots of suds get my dishes really clean?

A: Most of us like a lot of suds, but they're really not necessary to get dishes clean. It's the surfactants – cleaning agents – that do the cleaning. In hand dishwashing detergents, suds are an indication that the detergent is still working.

Q: What are surfactants and what do they do?

A: Surfactants are ingredients in cleaning products that enable the cleaning solution to wet a surface (e.g., clothes, dishes, countertops) more quickly, so soil can be readily loosened and removed (usually with the aid of mechanical action). Surfactants also emulsify oily soils and keep them dispersed and

suspended so they do not settle back on the surface. To accomplish their intended jobs effectively, many cleaning products include two or more surfactants.



Beat Bathroom Clutter

Cleaning and clearing to make your bathroom clutter-free!

1. Clear the clutter. Empty the medicine chest and clear off countertops. Throw away items that are no longer needed.
2. Zap dirt. Clean medicine chest and countertops with an all-purpose cleaner. Then, clean and replace only those items that you use every day.
3. Clean easy. Use flushable bathroom wipes to clean sinks, faucets, basins, toilet rims, and tanks. They're safe for plumbing and septic tanks.
4. Mirror on the wall. Spray a small amount of glass cleaner on the mirror. Wipe until it's completely dry to avoid streaks.
5. Spray it on. Spray the bathtub, tile, and shower walls and doors with an all-purpose cleaner. Then, wipe clean.
6. Brush & flush. Clean stains in the toilet bowl with the drop of a tablet or squirt of a gel. These new forms of toilet bowl cleaners keep your toilet clean and fresh!
7. Stop & mop. An all-in-one mopping unit is a rinse-free way to remove dirt from floors. The disposable, electrostatic cloths contain a cleaning solution that dissolves soils.