

Reducing the Spread of Germs: Tips for Teachers



Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to 2 hours or more on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. (Ansari, 1988; Scott and Bloomfield, 1989).

Teachers can help cut down on the spread of germs in the classroom with a few steps.

Keep Hands Clean

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Teach children to wash their hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

Try to give students the opportunity to wash their hands at some key times:

- upon arriving at school
- before and after lunch
- after using the restroom
- after recess
- before leaving school to go home

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting.



Cover Your Cough

With Tissue: Keep tissue handy for students to cover their nose and mouth when they cough or sneeze. Have them throw the tissue away after they use it.

With Sleeves: Since grabbing a tissue isn't always fast enough, teach students to cough or sneeze into their sleeve, using a bending at the elbow. This works anytime, anywhere.

Not with Hands: Help students break the habit of coughing or sneezing into their hands, which something many of us learned was the polite thing to do. Have them wash their hands after they cough or sneeze. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Don't Touch Your Face: Remind students not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

Clean Surfaces Daily

- Clean frequently touched surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled.
- Use anti-bacterial wipes or disinfectant spray to clean surfaces in the classroom.
- Keep all disinfectants labeled and out of the reach of children.

Remember, handwashing with soap and warm water is the most effective way to prevent and reduce the spread of disease causing germs. These handy tips should be also be followed by all staff members and guests in your classroom.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention