

## Have a healthy flu season!

1. Wash your hands often and well!
2. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables to ensure you are getting the vitamins and nutrients your body needs. Check Canada' Food Guide for more information: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>
3. Avoid contact or getting close to others who are sick. If coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose a lot or have a fever, stay home to get well and to prevent the spread of illnesses to others.
4. Get plenty of sleep – 9 hours is recommended!
5. Recognize the signs and symptoms of illnesses and learn how to best treat them:

Seasonal Flu: <http://healthy Canadians.gc.ca/health-sante/disease-maladie/flu-grippe-eng.php>

Seven Keys to a safer and healthier home:

<http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/portals/idp/preventionone.pdf>

A fantastic guide for parents, teachers, and child care workers:

<http://www.vch.ca/media/SneezesDiseases.pdf>

...And some more information....

## **Handwashing, Soaps, Hand Sanitizers and Cleaning Agents**

### **Soap**

The purpose of hand washing is to wash away the germs that cause infections as well as the dirt and grime that attract germs. Use plain soap. Plain soap works just as well as antibacterial soap to prevent infections and does not have the negative medical side effect of promoting antibiotic resistance. Infections that are caused by antibiotic resistant bacteria are difficult to cure and are sometimes fatal.

### **Good Bacteria and Bad Bacteria**

Despite what television and magazine advertising would have us believe, not all germs are bad. If all of the living things on the face of the earth were gathered together, over

60% would be bacteria. There are more than 3 billion kinds of bacteria. Most are harmless and many are beneficial. They help with digestion and the immune system and are an integral part of our environment. There is no need to sterilize your home, office or other living spaces. Cleaning is sufficient. You are not doing surgery in your kitchen!

### **Antibacterial Products**

Triclosan is the most common antibacterial ingredient that is added to soaps and cleaning agents. Triclosan promotes antibiotic resistance. In 2000 there were 23 products on the market that contained triclosan. Now there are thousands, ranging from soaps to window cleaners to lipstick. Read product labels carefully and avoid those that list triclosan as an ingredient.

### **Hand Sanitizers**

Hand sanitizers are a quick way to kill germs on the hands. Only alcohol-based sanitizers are recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada and Alberta Health Services. These products need to contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective. Importantly alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill both bacteria and viruses and do not promote antibiotic resistance. They are especially useful when it is difficult to get to a sink, such as in the car or in a park or playground.

Some caution is needed with these products because they are both flammable and poisonous if ingested. They should not be placed near a source of heat or left unsupervised. Further, some alcohol-based hand sanitizers also contain triclosan, so read labels carefully. Last, these products do not clean the hands nor do they work if the hands are greasy or dirty. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not a substitute for handwashing.

**WASH YOUR HANDS! USE PLAIN SOAP!**

### **How to Wash Your Hands**

The principles of good hand washing are to remove germs from your hands and to leave the washroom without re-contaminating your hands. It's easy. Here are the steps to good hand washing:

1. Wet your hands
2. Apply soap. Use plain soap.
3. Rub hands together. It takes about 20 seconds to rub all parts of your hands:
  - Palms
  - Between your fingers

- Backs
  - Wrists
  - Thumbs
  - Fingertips
  - Nails
4. Rinse for 10 seconds or until all the soap is gone
  5. Dry your hands with a clean disposable towel
  6. Use the towel to turn off the tap and let yourself out the door

*Remember to leave the washroom neat and tidy.*

This article was developed by Do Bugs Need Drugs? in collaboration with Alberta Education, Alberta Health and Wellness, and Alberta Health Services.