

Preventing the Spread of an Infectious Disease

About this topic

Diseases that spread easily have always been around. Sometimes these diseases spread from one person to another person. Sometimes they spread from animals to people. Other times, they spread through germs in the water, soil, food, or air.

Some diseases can be prevented or controlled with a vaccination, like measles. Other diseases may not have a vaccine or drugs to treat them. Because of this, it is important to prevent the spread of diseases.

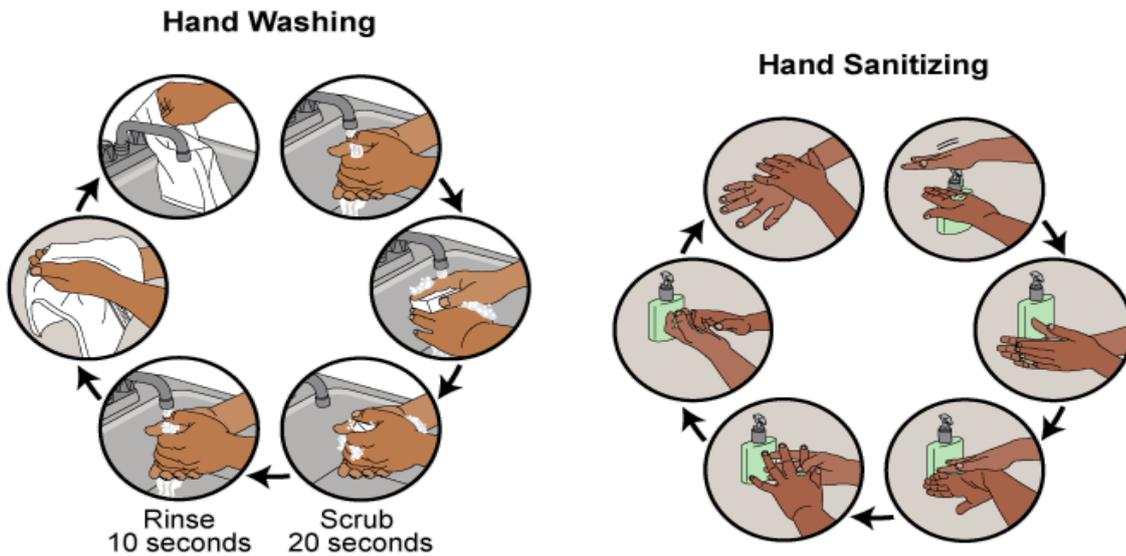
General

Governments and hospitals may use a few practices to separate and restrict people's movement. Each of these has a different role to help stop or limit the spread of diseases.

- Isolation
 - Used when people are already sick
 - May happen at home or in a hospital or clinic
 - The person who is sick is often separated from other people

- Quarantine
 - Used to keep people who have been exposed, but are not sick yet, away from healthy people
 - May happen at home or in a selected place
 - Health officials may ask you to check your temperature and report your signs to them

- Social distancing
 - Limits close contact between healthy people. This means staying at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from others.
 - Schools and workplaces may close or provide ways to learn or work from home.
 - Social events may be canceled. Some stores, restaurants, gyms, theaters, etc may close to protect the public.



Staying Healthy



What can be done to prevent this health problem?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available. Rub your hands with the sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.
- Keep your hands away from your nose, eyes, and mouth. Germs most often enters the body through these parts.
- Avoid sharing your towels, tissues, food, or drink with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid crowds. Try to stay home as much as you can. If you do need to be in a group of other people, wash your hands often. Try to stay at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart. Avoid handshakes, hugs, and high fives.
- Get a flu shot each year.

To keep from spreading germs in the house or other places:

- If you are sick, stay at home. Stay in a separate room if possible. Often you can spread germs a few days before you have signs and as long as you still have symptoms.
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze. You can also cough into your elbow. Throw away tissues in the trash and wash your hands after touching used tissues.
- Keep your house clean by wiping down counters, sinks, faucets, doorknobs, telephones, remotes, and light switches with a cleaner with bleach or other disinfectant. Wash dishes in the dishwasher or with hot soapy water. Many germs can live on solid surfaces for 24 hours or longer.

Helpful tips

Being placed on quarantine can be stressful. Here are some tips that may make it a little easier.

- Before a quarantine is set up, make a plan. Prepare for at least 2 weeks in your home for all family members and pets. Have enough food and water for everyone.
- Be sure you have a thermometer that works and a fever-reducing drug like acetaminophen. Have plenty of tissues, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies available.
- Make sure you have enough prescription drugs that each person may need for a few weeks.
- Consider things like work, school, and childcare when you make your plan. You may need to do your normal activities, like work or school, from home.
- Plan for how you will stay in touch with family and friends during this time.
- Have a reliable source of information about the quarantine. Use simple terms to explain to young children.
- Think about how you might care for a family member if they get sick. Will you be able to separate them from others in your house?

Where can I learn more?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/quarantineisolation.html>

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