



University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service

Preventing Infectious Diseases

When disease-causing microorganisms get into our bodies, they can cause illness and sometimes death. These microorganisms are called pathogens. Just who are these troublemakers? They are bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. We can take steps to prevent these organisms from making us sick.



How Germs Spread

Infections can be spread in many ways. Sometimes a person who is sick spreads a disease by coming in contact with someone else. Other times, a healthy carrier may spread the disease to others, but show no symptoms of the disease himself. This can happen with typhoid, diphtheria, and even some cases of salmonellosis, the foodborne illness. Infected animals can also spread illness to humans by direct or indirect contact, for example, through contaminated milk. While other infections can come from our environment. An example would be an air conditioner that contains infectious organisms.

How to Wash Hands

We can reduce our chances of getting sick by hand washing. Always wash your hands in warm, running water using soap. To kill the most germs, rub your hands briskly for at least 20 seconds while washing.

Antibiotics

Our bodies are very good at fighting infection, but sometimes we need antibiotics for extra help. Antibiotics kill bacteria, but not viruses. Always take antibiotics as your doctor orders. Overuse of antibiotics or not taking them as directed can result in antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

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