

Hygiene

What to know

Hygiene (practices that improve cleanliness) is a core prevention strategy to lower risk from respiratory viruses. Core prevention strategies are important steps you can take to protect yourself and others from respiratory viruses.

Recommendation

Practice good hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing your hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.

How it works

Covering your coughs and sneezes limits the spread of germs to protect others. Handwashing with soap removes germs from your hands, making them less likely to infect your respiratory system when you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol can kill these germs. To remove germs and dirt on surfaces, use household cleaners that contain soap or detergent.

Steps you can take

Individuals can

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you [cough or sneeze](#). Throw used tissues in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
- Learn and use [proper handwashing technique](#).
- [Teach children](#) the correct way to wash their hands.
- [Clean](#) frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs regularly.

Organizations can

- Order [free hygiene posters](#) and display them in highly visible areas.
- Make sure facilities are equipped with soap, water, and a way to dry hands (for example, paper towels or a hand dryer).
- Place hand sanitizer dispensers with at least 60 percent alcohol near frequently touched surfaces and in areas where soap and water are not easily accessible, such as near elevators, shared equipment, and building entrances and exits.
- [Clean](#) frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs regularly.

Key times for prevention

All of the prevention strategies described in this guidance can be helpful to reduce risk. They are especially helpful when:

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of [illness in your community](#).
- You or the people around you were recently exposed to a respiratory virus, are sick, or are recovering.
- You or the people around you have [risk factors for severe illness](#).