



# Fact Sheet: Spread of Disease

There are five ways that infectious diseases are spread from one person to another. They are: airborne, droplet, direct contact, fecal-oral, and blood-borne. Each disease follows one of these modes of transmission. You can help prevent diseases by taking certain precautions.

**AIRBORNE DISEASES:** Fine moist particles are coughed or exhaled into the air by an infected person and inhaled into the body of a susceptible person.

**Examples:** Influenza (flu), chickenpox, mumps

**Prevention:** The sick person should cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing and wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Others should avoid contact with the person during contagious periods.

**DROPLET (mucus and secretions):** Sneezing and coughing spread the droplets from the nose, mouth and throat; these germ-filled secretions fall on all surfaces. When someone touches these infected surfaces they contaminate their hands, and then infect themselves by touching their own nose or mouth.

**Examples:** Tuberculosis (TB), colds

**Prevention:** The sick person should cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing and then wash their hands. Dispose of used tissues in the trash container. Make sure to wash your hands with soap after touching items used by someone who is sick.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or 257-3612.*

**DIRECT CONTACT:** Germs are spread when an infected person touches someone or something and then a susceptible person in turn touches the same area. This includes objects like hats, combs, car seats, bed linens, and towels.

**Examples:** pinkeye, ringworm, scabies, lice, and pinworm

**Prevention:** Limit contact with the skin or belongings of an individual. Wash your hands immediately after contact with the infected person's skin or belongings.

**FECAL-ORAL:** Very small particles of germs from feces contaminate the hands of sick individuals after bowel movements. Items touched by these people become contaminated (toilet handles, water faucets, door knobs, food). Someone touching these same items or eating food prepared by infected people can themselves become infected and pass on the disease.

**Examples:** Hepatitis A, giardia, shigellosis, salmonella

**Prevention:** Clean potentially infected surfaces with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water (make this solution fresh daily). Wash your hands after using the bathroom and immediately before preparing food. People with diarrhea should not prepare food.

**BLOOD-BORNE/BODY FLUIDS:** Germs carried in blood and other body fluids get into the body of another person. Some methods of transmission are needle and razor sharing, unsafe sex, and splashed body fluids onto cuts or mucous membranes (eyes, mouth).

**Examples:** Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV

**Prevention:** Assume that all body fluids are infectious and avoid contact (wear latex gloves when in contact with fluids, use condoms or barriers during sexual intercourse). Clean surfaces with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water (make this solution fresh daily). Never share needles, razors, or toothbrushes.

Visit our website at: [www.gchd.us](http://www.gchd.us) or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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