



# A Teachers Guide to Good Hygiene in the Classroom

## Overview of Germs and Common Illnesses in Children:

- Common respiratory infections often result in coughs and colds that are relatively harmless and do not require treatment.
- When children are first exposed to germs in a group setting (e.g., child care/school), their immune systems are still developing and may take time to respond to common germs that cause infection.
- When older children first enter group settings (e.g., kids entering school who haven't been in child care), they're more likely to get frequent infections in the first few years than their classmates.



### Q&A with Dr. Laura Jana *Renowned pediatrician and author*

**Q:** With a classroom full of students, do I need to worry that germs are being spread everywhere?

**A:** Germs are all around us, including in the classroom. But rather than worrying about all germs, simply focus your efforts on limiting the spread of illness-causing germs. Since these germs are often spread on hands, and there are so many pairs of hands in the typical classroom, it makes the best sense to focus your germ-fighting attention on handwashing and areas around the classroom most likely to come in contact with unwashed hands

**Q:** Where are germs most likely to be found?

**A:** In general, germs like warm, moist places. They tend to live in body fluids (think respiratory droplets coughed into the air or into one's hands and/or runny noses, for example) and sometimes in foods. Germs can also survive on surfaces.

**Q:** How long can germs survive on surfaces like tables and door handles?

**A:** According to the CDC<sup>1</sup>, we know that some viruses and bacteria can live for two or more hours on surfaces like tables, doorknobs and desks. In some instances, germs can live on surfaces for much longer — not just hours, but even days. That means that hands used to cover a cough or rub a nose, or a used tissue set on a table, can easily leave behind illness-causing germs.

**Q:** Where are germs most likely to be found around the classroom?

**A:** In addition to focusing on any areas in the classroom where germs are most likely to thrive, such as around the sink or other moist areas, it also helps to focus on "high-traffic" areas of the classroom. These are simply the commonly touched surfaces in the classroom that are most likely to come in frequent contact with unwashed students' (and adults') hands throughout the day, such as door handles, sink handles and even tables.

**Q:** How important is it to limit the spread of illness-causing germs?

**A:** Children average 6 to 10 colds a year, and common colds are to blame for an estimated 22 million lost school days a year in the United States<sup>2</sup>. Efforts to limit the spread of germs in the classroom, where children (and teachers) are inherently in close contact for many hours a day, is therefore considered a very effective way to combat the common cold and illness-causing germs.

Visit [www.lysol.com/schools](http://www.lysol.com/schools) and [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information on preventing germs in the classroom and at home





# Tips for Teaching Hygiene in the Classroom

- To help keep students from spreading illness-causing germs, the best thing to do is focus on simple, effective measures that we know work to limit the spread of germs. In the classroom, you can include such simple yet effective measures as making sure students routinely wash their hands, cover their coughs (with their arms rather than their hands), dispose of tissues rather than leaving them sitting around, and don't share cups or utensils.



- Handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs in a classroom. While a quick rinse may suffice for washing paint off one's hands, soap and water is a must when it comes to getting rid of germs. To effectively wash away germs, be sure to teach your students to scrub in-between fingers, under nails, and on both sides of their hands and make sure they do so for at least 15 to 20 seconds (the time it typically takes to hum "Happy Birthday" twice).
- Focus your classroom's handwashing routines on the key times your students' hands are most likely to be germ. These include after going to the bathroom; after blowing noses, coughing, or sneezing; after playing outside; after touching used tissues or other contaminated surfaces; after touching a class pet; and/or after touching garbage. Consider having your students wash their hands more frequently when there's more illness going around.
- When soap and water are not available, however, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol can help in some situations to decrease the number of germs on hands. Just be aware that hand sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty.
- Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in schools, as reinforced by the CDC.<sup>3</sup> While cleaning is important for physically removing dirt and germs from objects or surfaces in the classroom, it does not actually kill germs. Disinfecting wipes can be a practical way to target and kill illness-causing germs in the classroom. For the sake of both safety and effectiveness, always use EPA-registered disinfectants, including disinfecting wipes, and be sure to use them according to the instructions on the label. Focus on wiping frequently-touched surfaces in the classroom, such as door handles, sink handles, and even tables and chairs.