



Children's Hospital

HEALTHY

Kidz

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Hand washing can prevent illness during cold and flu season

Colds, the flu and other illnesses spread quickly from person to person through the air and from direct contact. Unwashed hands provide a breeding ground for germs of all kinds and can quickly lead to rapid infection. One of the most common ways that people contract colds is by rubbing their eyes or nose after contracting a cold virus. Then the same virus is spread to other people and surfaces, and soon dozens could be ill. The average baby or toddler catches up to ten colds per year, and school-age children usually catch three to six colds per year. However, simply washing your hands, and making sure that your children do the same, is a simple and effective way to prevent the spread of disease.

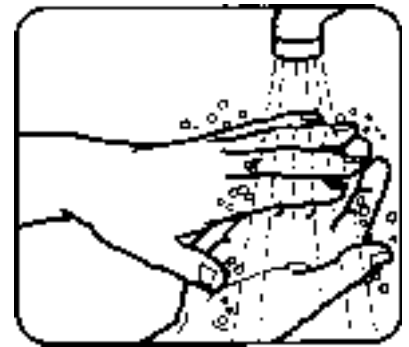
This simple hygiene isn't hard, and it doesn't take long. Just remember a few rules, and your family will be on their way to fewer colds and illnesses.

Always wash your hands:

- before eating or touching food in any way
- after using the bathroom
- after coughing or blowing your nose
- after touching any pets or animals
- after playing outside
- when someone in your home is ill, wash your hands frequently

It is also important to wash your hands the right way. Always use warm water and soap. Work up a lather on both sides of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers and around your nails for 10-15 seconds, try singing the chorus of your favorite song to time yourself. Then rinse and dry your hands with a clean towel.

Colds aren't the only illness easily transmitted through person to person contact; hepatitis A, meningitis and infectious diarrhea can all be transmitted through unwashed hands. Countertops, doorknobs, money and telephones are often culprits that harbor germs. Insisting on proper hygiene can help keep your family healthy. By frequently washing your hands, you kill germs that have been picked up from contaminated surfaces, animals and other people. Hand washing is generally considered to be the most important way to stop the spread of infection.



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Watch for signs of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in children

Colds, flu and chicken pox are a prevalent health problem in children and infants, but there is one respiratory virus that can be particularly serious for very young children: RSV. Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a virus that causes infection of the lungs and breathing passages. RSV is very common in children from December to March and is a potentially serious illness for young children and infants.

RSV is spread easily from person to person through secretions expelled by coughing, sneezing and runny noses. Early symptoms of the virus resemble that of the common cold. It can infect the same person several times in a lifetime, causing more severe illnesses (like pneumonia) in infancy, but only a common cold in older children and adults.

“The infection starts with the child coughing and having trouble breathing. The child may also have a low-grade fever and have little interest in eating or taking a bottle,” explains Dr. Lori Patterson, Pediatric Infectious Disease Specialist at East Tennessee Children’s Hospital. “Because these symptoms are so similar to colds, the virus may go undiagnosed until it has reached a more serious stage such as bronchiolitis (an infection of the upper airways of the lungs) or pneumonia.”

RSV infections occur all over the world, most often in epidemics that can last up to five months from late fall through early spring. From December 2000 through March 2001, East Tennessee Children’s Hospital treated 451 proven cases of respiratory syncytial virus.

According to Dr. Patterson, if the virus progresses to bronchiolitis in an infant, the child may need to be hospitalized to receive oxygen or other treatments. Any infection in the lungs can produce swelling, which can block the infant’s already small airways and make breathing extremely difficult. Children with lung diseases or heart defects have smaller lung reserves or may need more oxygen than a healthy child, so any restriction to their airways can be dangerous. In addition, antibiotics cannot cure RSV because it is a virus.

Frequent hand washing after coughing or sneezing can help reduce the spread of the virus, as can avoiding crowds during the winter months. Parents and childcare workers should watch for persistent cough, fever or breathing problems (especially in very young infants) and consult a pediatrician if these symptoms appear. Early detection can help prevent the spreading of the virus to other children.

Adults should be aware that they can also contribute to the spread of the virus. “An infant usually acquires the infection from close contact with an older family member who may not even realize that he or she is ill,” Dr. Patterson said. “In adults and older children, the virus may produce mild cold-like symptoms only.”



Think safety when selecting holiday toys

As children make their Christmas lists full of wishes for toys and parents plan for which toys they will purchase, the medical staff at East Tennessee Children's Hospital suggests several ideas for safety in toys this holiday season.

Each year, 5,000 new toys enter the market place. Despite the efforts that manufacturers, retailers, safety inspectors and others make, it is impossible to examine every toy. However, it is possible for parents, relatives and other adults to check every new toy a child receives and every old toy around the house for possible hazards.

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. The following suggestions may help you in purchasing and giving toys to the infants, children and teenagers on your holiday gift list this year:

- Choose carefully. Look for good design and quality construction in all toys you buy.
- Watch out for toys that have sharp edges, small parts, or sharp points.
- Beware of loose string, rope, ribbons, or cord on toys. These items can easily become tangled around a child's neck and strangle them.
- Buy toys that suit the child's age, interest and abilities. Many toys have a suggested age range to help you choose toys that are appealing as well as safe.
- Help children when using toy chests and other storage containers. Toy chests can pinch, bruise, or

break tiny fingers and hands if a lid closes suddenly. Open containers without lids are safest for toy storage.

- Be a label reader. Look for safety information such as "Not recommended for children under 3 years of age," or "non-toxic" on toys likely to end up in children's mouths, or "washable/hygienic materials" on stuffed toys and dolls.
- Check with parents before buying toys that require close supervision - such as electrically operated toys, shooting toys and games, chemistry sets and the like. Remember, too, that younger children may have access to toys intended for older children once the toy has been brought into the home.
- Look for the UL (Underwriters Laboratories) seal on electrical toys. It indicates the electrical parts have been tested for safety.



There are also seven dangers of toys that each parent or guardian should be aware of: sharp edges, small parts, loud noises, sharp points, propelled objects, electric toys and the wrong toy for the wrong age. It is also important to teach your child how to play with certain toys.

"All parents want to buy safe and fun toys for their children during the holidays," said Dr. Lise Christensen, Children's Hospital Emergency Medical Physician. "Reading labels, picking age appropriate gifts and parental supervision may keep children playing with their new toys at home instead of being harmed and needing to be brought to the emergency room." For more information about safe toy selection, visit the National Network for Child Care's website at www.nccc.org or call the Children's Hospital Community Relations Department at (865) 541-8165.

Chick-fil-A 10-Second Tip

Sing one verse of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" with your children while they wash their hands to make sure they scrub long enough. A minimum of 10-15 seconds is recommended.

Healthy Kids wants to know what you think

In addition to the *Healthy Kids* newsletters, The Healthy Kids program also offers parenting education classes on a variety of topics from Infant/Child CPR to promoting child's speech development. We want to know what topics interest you as parents, teachers and care givers.

Please call the Children's Hospital Community Relations Department at (865) 541-8166 with suggestions for classes. You may also e-mail us at care@etch.com or write to Healthy Kids, P.O. Box 15010, Knoxville, TN 37901.



... is a quarterly newsletter for parents, published by East Tennessee Children's Hospital.

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This newsletter is a part of Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Community Education Campaign, which serves as a resource for parents, offering classes, literature and other opportunities for learning how to improve children's health. For more information about Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Campaign, please call the community education line at (865) 541-8262.

Correspondence regarding the newsletter or Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Campaign may be addressed to:

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Knoxville, TN 37901-5010



Children's Hospital is a private, independent, not-for-profit institution, that has served the East Tennessee region for more than 60 years.

Chick-fil-A and WBIR-TV 10 have partnered with Children's Hospital as sponsors of Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Campaign. Chick-fil-A and WBIR are dedicated to promoting better health for the children of this region.

Visit the 17th annual Fantasy of Trees

November 21-25 at the Knoxville Convention/Exhibition Center

Start your Christmas season in style by taking a stroll through "An Enchanted Christmas Garden" at the 17th annual Fantasy of Trees to benefit East Tennessee Children's Hospital. Let the stars of our show, the more than 200 beautifully decorated trees, capture your imagination; then browse through a variety of unique shops in the Holiday Marketplace to find perfect gifts and holiday decorations; and let the sights and sounds of the Fantasy Theater get you into the holiday spirit. You can also enjoy the delightful Gingerbread Village and keep your children entertained with a variety of children's activities. After you enjoy the walk through the Fantasy of Trees, be sure to get your picture taken in Santa's sleigh and take a ride on the carousel.

For more information, please call the Fantasy of Trees Office at (865) 541-8385 or e-mail fot@etch.com.



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