



# ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors

# Preventing the spread of infectious diseases

## Introduction

This short handbook will provide you with some additional information about how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

This handbook will be useful in promoting positive mental health with members of your local health network. Thanks to reading this handbook you will know more about most certain ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

There are some proven ways to keep yourself healthy and infectious-free. It all comes to basic personal hygiene and hygiene of place we stay in.

## Wash Your Hands Frequently and Well

Washing your hands is crucial as disease-causing microbes are living everywhere around us, and we can get infected by simply touching commonly used items like on your computer keyboard or light-switch. Many diseases can be transmitted by another infected person, so bear in mind that if you will get infected, you may also infect other people helping a disease to spread.

While washing your hands remember to do it effectively. The CDC recommends

washing thoroughly and vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and then drying your hands with a paper towel. Towel is way more hygienic than electric hair dryers which can create an perfect environment for bacteria to grow.

In the case of the absence of running water you can use an alcohol-based hand gel or wipe, while you are in hospital – saying or visiting it is recommended to both wash and then disinfect your hands,

Don't rely too much on hand gel and wipes as soap and water are still the best way to clean your hands.

## Don't Share Personal Items

Next rule of basic hygiene we will focus on is not sharing personal items like toothbrushes, towels or razors, with other people, even your family members. Those kind of items can be sources of infectious bacteria, viruses, or even fungi. In other words – keep your personal items personal.

## Cook only in hygienic conditions

Cleaning your kitchen is not only the matter of proper behaviour and taste. It

doesn't only look nice, when it's hygienic it can save you from many infectious diseases.

Few quick tips:

- Always use fresh ingredients
- Clean all surfaces and wash your dishes everyday, before kind of mold has a chance to grow,
- Store your food in the safe way to avoid spoilage

## Don't pick your nose

It concerns also your eyes or ears. Picking this body part, and all other body parts that shouldn't be picked leads to spread of a number of infections.

You should also consider avoiding keeping your hands next to your face. This can help bacteria and other microorganism to travel from your hands directly into more comfort environment for their development – like your eyes, nose or mouth. Infections can be easily prevented by following these simple rules..

## Be careful with animals

Infections, called 'zoonotic diseases' can be spread from animals.

If you have pets, make sure they get regular check-ups and that they are vaccinated. It is also important to clean litter boxes frequently.

Of course it is not only about pets. Different types of wild animals can carry diseases such as rabies or bird flu, plague and Lyme disease.

## Watch out for insects

In order to avoid getting some awful infectious disease make the area around your home unfriendly to rodents, and avoid high grass and bushes where you could easily meet ticks. Taking care of cleaning your house can help you avoid having fleas. You should also avoid contact with fly or mosquitoes that may infect you as well.

Of course it is not about hiding home avoiding any contact with nature, all we need to do is to maintain basic hygiene, wash hands after contact with any animal which is not our pet and disinfecting any bites.

## Be extra careful when you are already sick

If you already carry an infectious disease always remember about covering your mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing. This simple measure will stop this disease from spreading to your family, co-workers, friends and all people you will meet while being sick.

Remember to do that even if you feel well as the disease-causing microbe may have already started growing and dividing long before any symptoms of disease has begun to show.

Moreover, it is better to cover your mouth with your arm, sleeve, or crook of the elbow, rather than using your hands, as you may forget to wash them before touching some things or people, which will spread the disease anyway.

### **Get vaccinated**

Even if not getting vaccinated happens to be a popular trend nowadays we need to remember that vaccinations are the best and most certain way to prevent spread of infectious diseases on the globe level.

Getting artificialy “infected” with dead or weakened viruses enhances ones production of white blood cells and antibodies to prevent real infection.

### **Practice safe sex**

Watch out for sexually-transmitted diseases as they are pretty common and probably the most easily preventable infectious ones.

By using protection, and not changing your partner too often, you can prevent transfer of infectious bacteria or viruses from one person to another.

### **Travel smart**

Stay careful especially particularly when traveling to resource-limited countries. If your travel destination is one where water is questionable, make sure to drink only bottled water and avoid ice cubes, as they are usually made with tap water. Eat foods that have been cooked, and avoid raw vegetables and fruits and especially raw meat.

Most important, be sure to update all vaccines that are required for your travel destination, as you may catch infectious disease that doesn't naturally occurs in your home country and bring it home.

### **How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?**

This handbook presents information on the topic of how can you prevent the spread of infectious diseases. It helps us understand how easy process of spreading infectious diseases can be stopped by following simple tips mentioned in that handbook.

Reviewing this handbook before each session with the group will help you to lead a discussion about the topic.

In the resources you will also find a PowerPoint presentation which will help you to explain the topic to your group and start a conversation with them.

## Group Activity

After you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group, you can start a group discussion asking if all group members following questions:

- Would you vaccinate your child or not? Why? How about your dog?
- How often (how many times a day or a week) do you think people should wash their hands? Wash their clothes? Clean their flat

thoroughly? How often would you consider to rare or too often?

- How do you behave when you carry some infectious disease??

Once they are finished ask them to prepare “house rules” together. Stand next to whiteboard, write HOUSE HYGIENE RULES on the very top and ask them for suggestions what those rules should be. Write them down.

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Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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Project Number: 2018-1-UK01-KA204-048095