

Stopping the spread of germs

By National Geographic Society, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.28.20

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Image 1. Washing your hands is an easy way to stop germs from spreading. It helps prevent other people from getting sick. Photo: Nano Creative/Science Source

Sometimes, many people get sick all at the same time. This is called an outbreak. Illness or disease is passed from person to person.

Contagion is how it moved to different people. It could be by being sneezed on. It can also happen through the skin. There are ways to prevent and manage such disasters.

The best ways to make sure people do not get sick are those without medicines. You probably already know about some of them if you have had a cold.

Keep Your Germs To Yourself

Simple things such as staying home when you are sick. It keeps germs and bacteria away from other people. Wash your hands regularly. Keeping your hands clean keeps germs away from things everyone touches. Things like doorknobs or keyboards.



If you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth with a tissue. Or turn your face to the inside of your elbow.

Staying Away From Others

Sometimes, a person might go close to someone who is sick. But then they do not show symptoms. The person might be separated from others. But just until it is clear that they are no longer sick. This is called quarantine. It helps to keep people safe.

Isolation is when a sick person is separated from those who are not sick. They cannot go anywhere or do anything. This is different from quarantine. In quarantine, we do not know yet if the person is sick.

Keeping People Safe And Healthy

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a government group. It is known as the CDC. It helps to keep the country safe and healthy. The CDC can isolate or quarantine people. This helps healthy people stay safe.

There are places where many people gather. These are called public places. An example is a school. A school might close if there is a flu outbreak. This way, the flu is not passed around.

Food Can Carry Disease

Some diseases can be passed on in food. Salmonella is a bacteria. It can spread through food. Stores must stop selling food with salmonella. People can then stay safe.

The Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is a government group. It makes sure food is safe.

The CDC studies how people get sick from food. It finds what caused the illness. Technology makes that easier. The CDC and the FDA then tell the public. People will know if they should stop using certain food.

The government makes laws about food. It helps people to keep food clean and safe.



Quiz

- 1 Which group in the article makes sure the food we eat is safe?
 - (A) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - (B) The Center for Food Safety
 - (C) The Food and Drug Administration
 - (D) The Food and Disease Control Administration

- 2 Which sentence from the section “Staying Away From Others” explains WHY people sometimes need to be separated from others?
 - (A) Sometimes, a person might go close to someone who is sick.
 - (B) But then they do not show symptoms.
 - (C) But just until it is clear that they are no longer sick.
 - (D) It helps to keep people safe.

- 3 How is quarantine different from isolation?
 - (A) Isolation keeps people away from others.
 - (B) Quarantine keeps people away from others.
 - (C) Isolation is for people who might be sick.
 - (D) Quarantine is for people who might be sick.

- 4 What happens when you wash your hands regularly?
 - (A) It keeps germs away from the things you touch.
 - (B) It makes it easier for you to get sick.
 - (C) It prevents germs from getting on your hands.
 - (D) It spreads the germs from your hands to others.