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# THE STRAITS TIMES INTERACTIVE

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## That tap may spread contagious diseases

THE article, 'Diarrhoea cases at polyclinics up' (ST, Oct 11), pointed out a number of ways in which noroviruses can be spread.

One very common way not highlighted and applicable to all highly contagious diseases is through surfaces to which we don't give much thought.

Examples are the button or handle of the toilet flush, the toilet-cubicle door handle and locking knob, and the washbasin tap, all of which get pressed, pushed or gripped by a contaminated hand after one cleans oneself with toilet paper, unless one makes a point of using the other hand, but who does?

The worst is that one first touches the tap handle to turn it on before washing (unwittingly contaminating it), washes one's hands thoroughly with soap, then touches the contaminated tap to turn it off, and goes off thinking one's hands are clean. The tap could then also contaminate the next person to touch it. So could the handles of the flush, cubicle door, and lock. Note that, most times, the 'next person' is not likely to use soap, except for the 'necessary' occasions.

The more and more common use of automatic flushes (which unfortunately get out of order very easily) and taps is excellent for public hygiene and they should be standard facilities in public toilets.

The only public awareness left to be raised then would be over not touching anything with the hand one uses to clean oneself before it is washed.

Micro-organisms are invisible to the eye, yet can be extremely contagious. The recent school outbreaks are a good opportunity to remind everyone to be vigilant and to change habits for the better.

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### CHANGE HABITS

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