



A thumbs-up to clean hands



Q1 I just recovered from flu and now my husband and children are sick. This always happens to my family when one of us falls sick. How can I stop the spread of germs and prevent us from getting sick frequently?

A The flu virus is spread by the release of tiny droplets of

nasal or oral secretions from the sufferer. These droplets can land on any surface or on another person.

The virus, which can live for days on a suitable surface, is most commonly spread by contamination from fingers and objects on which it is residing.

Practising good personal hygiene will help in protecting you

and your family.

If a family member falls sick with an upper respiratory tract infection, observe the following:

- Do not share eating utensils. The virus on the utensil is waiting to be passed on to the next pair of hands.
- Always wash hands before eating to prevent the spread of germs on the hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and wash your hands after that.
- Avoid close contact (for example, kissing and hugging) with the person when he or she is sick.

Adopt healthy lifestyle practices. This can help to decrease your susceptibility of developing an illness. These practices include:

- Regular exercise
- Healthy eating
- Following a no-smoking lifestyle
- Managing stress

Q2 Some of the students in my daughter's childcare centre were infected by Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD). I'm very

worried that she will get infected and spread it to her younger siblings. I understand that the schools teach them hygiene, but I'm still worried. What should I do?

A HFMD is caused by a virus that can spread by direct contact with the nasal discharge, saliva, faeces and fluid from the rash of an infected person.

Hence the best way to prevent it would be to instil good hygiene practices. This can be done by reinforcing its importance to everyone in the family.

Teach your daughter and her siblings, if they are old enough to understand, the following:

- Wash their hands with soap, especially before eating and after going to the toilet.
- To cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Not to share eating utensils with others.

You should also clean dirty surfaces and soiled items such as toys before they are used again.

If your daughter does get infected with HFMD, consult a doctor early.

Look out for any change in her behaviour or if she refuses to eat and/or drink or starts to vomit.

Keep her at home till all the blisters have dried. Avoid close contact (for example, kissing and hugging) with the others who are well, until she recovers.

Keep her toys, eating utensils, towels and clothes separate from the others. Practise the good hygiene measures as mentioned earlier.

There is no specific preventive measure for HFMD, but good hygiene practices can help to lower the risk of infection.

Questions were answered by Dr Khoo Poh Choo from the Singapore Paediatric Society. The information provided is for your general knowledge only. You should seek professional advice or treatment for your child's condition.

Q1, our question of the week wins a Kirei Kirei gift set worth \$60. The winner has been notified. Stand a chance at winning this gift set by emailing your questions on hygiene care to hygienecare@newstoday.com.sg