



Tips For Guests: Health & Hygiene

Cold and flu season. SARS. Foodborne illness outbreaks. It seems like germs are everywhere these days. So how do you avoid them? Especially when you're away from home, exposed to crowds of people and unfamiliar settings? A good place to start is by remembering those life lessons we learned

back in kindergarten: wash your hands, use a facial tissue when you sneeze, and "do unto others." Here are some tips to keep in mind when you're working, playing or otherwise traveling away from home.

Respiratory Etiquette

(courtesy of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to help keep them from getting sick too.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a facial tissue when coughing or sneezing. Place used facial tissues in a waste receptacle.

Handwashing

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- According to the CDC, washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Most health experts agree that hands should be washed: after using the restroom; before cooking and eating; after coughing, sneezing, or using a facial tissue; after handling raw/uncooked food items; after handling/petting animals; after changing a baby's diaper; and any time hands are visibly soiled.

- Wash your hands the right way. Wet hands with water, then apply soap. Rub hands vigorously together for at least 15 seconds. Cover all surfaces of hands, fingers and thumbs. (Don't forget to clean areas around and under fingernails.) Rinse hands well to remove soap residue, then dry hands gently using a paper towel. Use that paper towel to turn off the water faucet to avoid re-contaminating clean hands.
- When a sink and water aren't available, sanitize your hands with an alcohol-based hand gel. Remember, while alcohol-containing preparations reduce germs on hands, they cannot remove visible soil or contamination. It is therefore important to WASH hands any time they are visibly dirty. Choose alcohol handrubs containing 60-95% alcohol. If dry skin is an issue, look for a formulation with 1-3% glycerol or other skin conditioning agents, which cause much less skin irritation and dryness.

Restroom Etiquette

- Even when a public restroom looks clean, it actually may not be so, from a germ standpoint. Most folks wouldn't eat off a public restroom floor and know to avoid contact with a public restroom toilet seat. But did you know that a restroom's hot water tap may be more likely to harbor germs? Be aware that these and other areas are germ "hot zones," including the sink and countertop; toilet paper, paper towel, hand soap and feminine product dispensers; and even the door you open on the way out of the restroom.
 - If you have the option, try to find a public restroom that employs no-touch systems such as doorless entryways, sensor-activated toilets and sinks, and no-touch dispensers for toilet paper, hand soap and hand towels.
- When the restroom you're visiting does not use no-touch systems, employ some common sense. Touch as little as possible. Use paper towels or toilet paper as a "buffer" if you need to reach into a dispenser or activate a lever on a dispenser, faucet or toilet. ALWAYS use a paper towel to shut off the water faucet when you're done washing your hands as well as to open the door on the way out.

Surface Sanitation

- In hotels, as in other public places, keep in mind that every surface you touch has been touched by at least one other person. Door handles, check-in counters, elevator buttons, stair rails and fitness center equipment are just some of the commonly touched surfaces in hotels. Limit your fingertip contact with these surfaces ... use your shoulder to open a door, push the elevator button with your elbow or knuckle, and avoid touching anything you don't have to.
- Clearly, however, you will need to touch certain surfaces. That's why it's important to wash your hands often or de-germ them with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Let your money do the talking. Whether you're a one-time guest or a frequent visitor, let your hotel manager know when you notice cleanliness problems. Most will welcome the opportunity to improve guest satisfaction.