

New School, New Germs Protecting Your Back-to-Schoolers

As parents prepare for the start of a new school year, it's a good time to think about how to keep your children healthy and prevent the spread of germs.

While germs are generally unavoidable in public places, they are even more prevalent in schools. Between the innocent, lack of attention that is innate in children and the challenge of disinfecting large, busy public buildings, it's no wonder that children have eight to 12 colds per year, according to the Centers for Disease Control.¹

Germ transmission in school happens most often in places like drinking fountains (a perfect place for kids to share germs through the proximity of their mouths to the water stream or the fountain itself), cafeteria trays, tables and other surfaces.

Not all germs are harmful or induce illness, but children should be taught about basic hygiene and healthy habits. Some basic tips that you can teach your children to help avoid the spread of germs include:

- Avoid close contact, particularly with other children who are sick. If you are sick yourself, keep your distance to protect others. If possible, keep your children home when they are sick.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and then be sure to discard the tissue in the garbage. In the absence of a tissue, cough or sneeze on your upper sleeve – not in your hands – to avoid the spreading of germs.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect any toys, tools, surfaces or objects that you may be handling.

In addition to these practices, children should always exercise, eat healthy meals and snacks and get at least an average of 10 hours of sleep.² These simple steps will add to your barrier against colds, flu or other infections.

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1. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/15/health/avoid-school-germs/index.html>

2. <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Supports-Childhood-Sleep-Guidelines.aspx>

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