



# INFECTION PREVENTION & YOU

## DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE

To help prevent infections, keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Why? These mucous membranes are a portal of entry for germs that cause respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

### Why is not touching your face so important?

Respiratory infections, like pneumonia, flu, or COVID-19, can spread through droplets in the air when a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks near you. They can also spread by direct contact with bacteria, viruses, and other disease-causing germs. When we touch people who are sick, or touch dirty surfaces, we contaminate our hands with germs. We can then infect ourselves with those germs by touching our face.

### How are respiratory infections spread?

Respiratory infections, like pneumonia or the flu, can spread through droplets in the air when a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks near you. Respiratory infections can also spread by direct contact with bacteria, viruses, and other disease-causing germs. When we touch people who are sick, or touch dirty surfaces, we contaminate our hands with germs. We can then infect ourselves with those germs by touching our face.

## How can I protect myself from respiratory infections?

There are several ways that you can protect yourself from getting a respiratory infection:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Never touch your face with dirty hands.
- Wash your hands frequently. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands if soap and water are not available.
- Get a flu shot every year. Encourage your family and friends to get a flu shot too!
- Ask your healthcare provider if the pneumonia vaccine is right for you.
- When it is available, get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Avoid being close to people who are coughing and sneezing.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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[APIC COVID-19 Resource Portal](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Resource Portal](#)

CDC—When and how to wash your hands: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Kwok, YLA., Galton, J., and McLaws, ML. Face touching: A frequent habit that has implications for hand hygiene. *Am J Infect Control*. 2015;43(2):112-114. Available at: [https://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553\(14\)01281-4/fulltext](https://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553(14)01281-4/fulltext).