

# Teaching Health Education: Germ Prevention

2012

# Learning the Topic

# Germ Prevention

- Germ are particularly strong during flu season (October-May)
- Germs are easily spread in crowded spaces:
  - Offices
  - Schools
  - Public transportation (e.g. buses, trains, metro)

# Germ Prevention Methods

- Hand-washing
- Sneezing into elbow (or tissue)
- Strengthening immune system
- Avoid sharing drinks
- Covering toothbrush
- Practicing safe food preparation
- Consulting a doctor about immunizations
- Cleaning and covering wounds

# Hand-Washing

- Appropriate times to wash your hands:
  - After using the bathroom
  - Before you eat
  - When preparing food
  - After coughing/sneezing into them
  - After touching trash, animals, diapers, wounds or sick individuals
  - After using the gym
  - Before putting in contact lenses

# Hand-Washing Tips

- How to wash your hands:
  - Wet your hands
  - Place soap in your hands and scrub them for 20-30 seconds
  - Rinse using warm water
  - Dry hands with a clean paper towel
  - Turn off tap with paper towel
- The *Dirty Truth*

Reports on hand-washing in public restrooms:

**Men:**

92% said they did  
58% actually did

**Women:**

97% said they did  
75% actually did

# Coughing and Sneezing

- Coughing and sneezing are the body's way of expelling germs or irritants:



Germs from a sneeze can travel up to 15 feet if uncovered

- Using your hand allows hand-to-hand or hand-to-object transfer
- Tip: sneeze into your elbow for least spread of germs

# The Immune System

- **Immune System** – organs and processes that protect your body against disease
- Strengthen your immune system by:
  - Getting proper nutrition
  - Hydrating
  - Getting enough sleep
  - Exercising regularly



# Germ Prevention at Home

- Close the toilet cover when flushing
  - **Did you know?** Toilet spray can travel up to 20 feet when flushing without the lid on.
- Cover your toothbrush or keep it in a cabinet
- Avoid sharing drinks
- Clean and cover wounds
- Change your home air filter monthly
- Practice safe food preparation
- Contain illness in the home

# Safe Food Preparation



CLEAN

- Wash hands before/after handling food
- Use hot, soapy water to clean cutting boards, utensils and countertops



SEPARATE

- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat
- Store raw meat in a no-drip container

# Safe Food Preparation



COOK

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is fully cooked
- Rotate/stir dishes for even heat
- Bring sauces/soups to a rolling boil when reheating



CHILL

- Keep fridge at 40 degrees (or below)
- Thaw meat in fridge or cold water – not on the counter
- Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours
- Allow room in fridge for air to circulate

# Containing Illness

- **When someone is sick**, you should:
  - Avoid sharing pillows – bring a covered bed pillow to the couch instead of using couch cushions
  - Wash your hands frequently
- **After someone in the house is sick**, you should:
  - Wash sheets and towels in hot water
  - Disinfect light switches, doorknobs and cabinet handles to remove germs

# Consequences of Germ Exposure

- Flu/cold
- Stomach illnesses
- Salmonella
  - **Source** – raw foods of animal origin (e.g. meat, eggs, milk and seafood)
  - **Prevention** – fully cook eggs and meat; don't eat raw dough or batter
- E. coli
  - **Source** – food or beverages contaminated with waste
  - **Prevention** – fully cook meat and drink pasteurized beverages

# Teaching the Topic

# Keys to a Successful Health Education Class

- Know your audience:
  - Age
  - Number of participants
  - Time limit
- Create a targeted presentation
- Bring appropriate materials, activities and giveaways
- Be flexible

# Keys to Teaching Germ Prevention

1. Use age-appropriate key messages
2. Use interactive tools/activities



# (1) Age-Appropriate Messages

## Children:

- Use the “batwing” to demonstrate sneeze-into-elbow
- Emphasize that germs can be invisible – kids often want to see to believe

## Adults:

- Discuss food safety habits related to cooking

## (2) Teaching Activities

1. Jeopardy (“Know it All”) game
2. Glo Germ demonstration
3. Demonstrate how far germs travel with silly string or spray bottle

## (2) Health Education Tools

- Cold vs. flu display board
- Food safety display board
- Food safety video
- Glo Germ kit
- Hand-washing poster

# Giveaways

- Bandage dispensers
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothbrush
- Toothbrush holder

# Conversation Starters

“Look at your hands and tell me how many germs you see.” (*Participants will likely say “none”.*)

“Now, rub your hand on the floor.” (*Have participants wipe their hand on the floor, bottom of their shoe, etc.*)

“You will likely still not see any germs, but do you believe that there aren’t any there?”