

# Infection Prevention and You



## Clean your home to prevent winter illness

As colder weather settles in and we spend more time indoors in enclosed spaces, it is time to think about winterizing our homes and cleaning dust and dirt which carry germs. A few simple tips can make the daunting task easier and provide for a cleaner environment for you and your family -- limiting the spread of cold and flu germs and other types of infections. Start at the top and work down...second floor to first floor to basement. Remember to make cleaning a family affair. Keeping a home clean should be shared by all members of the family.

Ready? Let's get started!

- Focus on public rooms: living room, family room, entryway, and guest baths because these are used by everyone who visits.
- Use a bleach solution to clean bathroom floors, countertops, toilets, sinks, and other surfaces. Chlorine bleach is effective in killing stomach viruses such as norovirus.
- Go with gravity: Clean from top to bottom. Vacuum drapes and window treatments. Clean window sills and window wells. Then vacuum baseboards and corners.
- Don't forget to clean high touch areas such as remote controls, light switches, computers including keyboards, etc. Germs can live on surfaces carrying them to the next user.
- Vacuum upholstered furniture, or have professionally cleaned if needed. Move furniture and vacuum beneath and behind it. Remember the lampshades, fan blades, and chandeliers that collect dust.
- Wash interior windows.
- Turn mattresses front-to-back and end-to-end to equalize wear and vacuum mattress and box springs.
- Launder or clean all bedding: mattress pads, pillows, duvets, blankets, comforters. Tuck the family into a warm and cozy winter bed.
- Deep clean carpeting and hardwood floors or schedule professional carpet cleaning.
- Prepare the kitchen for holiday cooking. Clean and organize kitchen cabinets, paying particular attention to baking supplies, pans, and equipment. Toss items that have not been sealed properly or are beyond shelf life.
- Pull refrigerator away from the wall, and vacuum the condenser coils. For bottom-mounted coils, use a long, narrow brush to clean coils of dust and debris.
- Wash light-diffusing bowls from light fixtures.
- If you have a central vacuum system, check and empty it.
- Clean electronic air cleaner elements monthly for most efficient operation. Wash them in an empty dishwasher (consult manual for specific product recommendations).
- Clean or replace humidifier elements before the heating season begins.
- Inspect washer hoses for bulges, cracks or splits. Replace them every other year.
- Check dryer exhaust tube and vent for built-up lint, debris or birds' nests! Make sure the exterior vent door closes tightly when not in use.
- Buy a winter's supply of furnace filters. Change filters monthly for maximum energy savings and indoor comfort. When the right filter is on hand, it's an easy job!
- Drain sediment from hot water heaters.

Above all, remember the importance of hand hygiene and its ability to prevent the spread of infections.

### Additional resources

APIC – Your home <http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-in/your-home/>

Mrs. Clean – Winter cleaning checklist <http://www.housecleaningcentral.com/en/cleaning-tips/checklists/winter-cleaning-checklist.html>