



**CITY OF PEABODY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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HOW TO STAY HEALTHY DURING FLU SEASON

Vaccination is not the only way to help prevent the flu and other illnesses. Here are steps you and your family can take to stay healthy this year.

Perhaps the simplest and most effective way is to **wash your hands often** – with soap and warm water. Rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces. Wash for at least 20 seconds. (Tip: have your children sing the ‘Happy Birthday’ song twice while washing.) It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.

When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn’t need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the flu. However, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers do not remove dirt.

Wash hands after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, before and after eating, after handling pets, and after sneezing or coughing into your hands. Other times to wash hands or use hand sanitizer include, but are not limited to, after using the ATM, after pushing a shopping cart, after pumping gas, and after handling money.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs are often spread when people touch something that is contaminated with germs and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs cause illnesses like the flu. The flu is usually spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the droplets from the cough or sneeze move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. So, always cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow to avoid contaminating your hands with germs.

Avoid public contact. If you feel ill, stay home from work and keep sick kids home from school. Also, if you and/or your children are ill, avoid large gatherings such as the mall, movie theater, sporting events, and concerts.

Lead a healthy lifestyle. Eat healthy foods, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep, and exercise to keep your immune system its strongest.

For more information, please call Public Health Nurse Michele Lawler of the Peabody Health Department at 978-538-5931 or visit www.mass.gov/handwashing



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