

## 4. Immunizations

Another way to prevent getting sick is to keep your immunizations (vaccinations) up to date. Vaccines work by introducing a dead or severely weakened form of the germ into your body, so that your body can figure out how to fight that germ without actually getting sick. While you may have some mild symptoms after receiving a vaccination, these symptoms are just your immune system waking up, not the actual illness.



The vaccines you should keep up to date include MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), TDAP (tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough), chicken pox, polio, influenza, pneumonia, and (depending on whether your job puts you at risk for these) Hepatitis A and B. Many of these vaccinations are paid for by employers, and if not, you can get them from your doctor for a small fee.



**STOP the spread of germs!**

- Wash your hands
- Cover your cough
- Stay home when you're sick
- Keep your immunizations up to date

## Things you should know about occupational health at your work site

### Do you know whom to contact if...

- You get sick at work?
- You injure yourself at work?  
(And do you know what forms to fill out?)
- You need your immunizations brought up to date?
- You have health and safety concerns at work?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, contact your **occupational health department** or **manager**.

If you have concerns about your health, contact your **family doctor** or **Healthlink BC** (dial 811).

### About PICNet

The Provincial Infection Control Network of BC (PICNet) is a provincial program of the Provincial Health Services Authority with a specific interest in the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections. You can find out more about us at [www.picnet.ca](http://www.picnet.ca).

### Other Resources

**BC Centre for Disease Control** has lots of information on health issues such as food safety, immunization, sexual health, and environmental health at [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca).

**WorkSafeBC** has a helpful document *Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease*, which you can find on their website [www.worksafebc.ca](http://www.worksafebc.ca).

**HealthLink BC** provides 24-hour, confidential health information and advice.

Website: [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) Phone: 811

# How to Stay Healthy at Work



## PICNet

PROVINCIAL INFECTION CONTROL  
NETWORK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

A program of the Provincial Health Services Authority

# How to stay healthy at work

Colds and flus can spread through a workplace quickly, especially if people are working close together. It's important that everyone does their part to avoid getting ill and prevent spreading illnesses in the workplace.



## How germs spread

Most winter illnesses (like influenza, norovirus, and the common cold) are caused by germs that enter our body, usually through the mouth, although sometimes through your nose or eyes. For an infection to spread from person to person, the germs have to get out of the infected person – usually from coughing or sneezing – and then into another person, usually from their hand (they touch a surface covered with germs) to their mouth (they eat without washing their hands first). If someone who's sick coughs into their hand, then touches a door handle, and then someone else touches that door handle before touching their mouth... the virus has just spread from one person to another.



The following four steps explain how you can reduce the spread of germs.

## 1. Hand washing

Germs are all around you, so you have to prevent them from getting *into* you. Have you ever seen someone pick up a pen and put it in their mouth? Or cough into their hand and then use a shared object like a phone, keyboard, or tool? You're touching germ-covered surfaces all day without realizing it, so you want to make really sure that you don't put your fingers in your mouth (or chew that pen someone else touched!) and that you always clean your hands right before eating.



You can clean your hands by washing them with soap and water for at least 30 seconds, or by rubbing them with hand sanitizer for at least 15 seconds. Be sure to clean all the areas of your hands: palms, fingers, fingertips and nails, and don't forget your thumbs! Carrying hand sanitizer with you is a good idea because otherwise it's hard to clean your hands right before you eat, i.e. after you've handled money, carried your lunch tray, and touched the shared ketchup container!



## 2. Cover your cough... properly!

Washing your hands can stop the germs getting into you after you've touched germ surfaces... now let's stop covering those surfaces in germs! Many of us were taught when we were kids to cough into our hands; this was to stop us coughing directly into people's faces. But coughing into hands is a bad idea, because then people touch things with their germ-coated hands! Instead, cough into your elbow and make sure you turn away from people at the same time. Don't spread those germs around to everyone else!



## 3. Stay home when you're sick

Another way to prevent spreading your germs to your co-workers is to stay home when you're sick. If you have a fever, coughing or sneezing (from cold/flu, not allergies), vomiting or diarrhea, or anything else that's likely to be infectious (i.e., that you can pass on), stay home until the symptoms have passed and you feel well enough to go back to work. You might think that dragging yourself in to work when you're sick is helpful to your co-workers because you're not leaving them short-staffed... but if you come in and spread your germs around the workplace, even more people will get sick and miss work.

