

# Protect Your Home:

Top 7 Infection Prevention Tips

For

Your Home

A Simple Solution to a Complex Problem:

A Dr. Will Sawyer Infection Prevention Report

Compliments of

Henry the Hand Foundation

One of the Henry the Hand Foundation's primary goals is to decrease the spread of infectious diseases by empowering individuals to protect themselves and their communities by implementing the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness. By working together, we can make a difference!

Dr. Will Sawyer and his team strive to promote true infection prevention techniques and strategies that are proven to reduce the spread of respiratory and gastro-intestinal diseases. These techniques create and maintain a healthier, safer home environment, keep our schools in session, and increase employee productivity in our workplaces!

After reading this report, you will understand:

- How to maintain a healthier, safer home environment.
- The difference between primary and secondary infection prevention techniques
- Why cross contamination is vital to keep your home healthy and safe
- How fast your home becomes contaminated by your sick friends or family members
- That the fear that accompanied the H1N1 Flu pandemic was unnecessary
- How the actual H1N1 Flu pandemic could have been avoided
- How we can thwart future pandemics
- And much more!

Our simple solution to the complex problem of infection prevention:

It is up to YOU to PREVENT the spread of germs.

Everyone has the ability to prevent **giving** him or herself a respiratory or gastrointestinal disease. This report will discuss the common misconception that someone else is responsible for giving you a germ. In reality, we are responsible for giving ourselves the germ.

Infection prevention starts in your home. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), healthcare, school, and food safety standards emphasize the importance of protecting facilities (hospitals, restaurants, schools, workplaces, etc.) from germ contamination. We recommend that you view your home like a facility that you would want to protect from the outside elements that disrupt the smooth functioning of its homeostasis.

Each home has a natural flora (environment) of organisms. So, introducing other virulent (highly infectious) organisms can disrupt your home's balance. This report will equip you with true primary infection prevention techniques, strategies to prevent infectious disease in your home, and tips for maintaining a healthier community by improving herd immunity (community immunity).

*The top 7 infection prevention tips for your home are:*

## **1) Understand the difference between primary and secondary infection prevention.**

- Secondary infection prevention refers to improving your body's reaction after an infection has entered your body. For example, flu vaccines, or

antibiotics/antiviral drugs, may lessen the body's reaction to a virus, bacteria, or another organism. The benefit of the flu vaccine is its potential to lower your body's reaction to a flu virus that you have given yourself.

The flu vaccine gives us a miniscule dose of the inactivated flu virus, or a component of the flu virus. The formulation of these vaccines is based upon projections about the next seasonal flu. These projections are drawn from health facilities' surveillance efforts the year prior. (Dr. Will Sawyer's private practice participates in this surveillance study for the CDC). The vaccine helps initiate a more positive immune response in our bodies to help us resist a reaction if we happen to "give" ourselves the flu.

If the flu virus strain used to create the vaccine differs from the flu circulating that year, or if that created strain differs from a flu-like virus we give ourselves, then we will still have a strong, adverse reaction to that virus. As a result of contracting that illness, we feel terrible as we are forced to suffer.

Vaccines and medications (secondary prevention techniques) do help to combat germs after inoculation (introduction) into our body. If our immune system performs optimally, then our bodies will see a protective response from vaccines.

- True primary infection prevention is literally "in your hands". Primary infection prevention does NOT refer to giving oneself the virus or bacteria as a means of prevention. The goal of true primary infection prevention is NOT to afford your body the opportunity to "fight" off the virus. Primary infection prevention

techniques DO revolve around the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness, a concept Dr. Will Sawyer has spent over 20 years perfecting and teaching.

- **Flu vaccines DO NOT prevent us from giving ourselves the flu!** We give ourselves the flu if we put our hands in the T-Zone (the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth). This is why it is so critical to comply with the 4<sup>th</sup> Principle of Hand Awareness! (See Tips 3 and 5 for more explanation). True primary infection prevention literally “is in your hands”. Primary infection prevention does NOT refer to giving oneself the virus or bacteria as a means of prevention. The goal of true primary infection prevention is NOT to afford your body the opportunity to “fight” off the virus.
- We all know that touching a hot stove presents a high risk for our hands. There is a good chance we’ll get burned if we touch a stove. What’s the simplest way to avoid burning yourself? Do not put your hands on the stove and you will not burn yourself! What if every time you put your fingers in your eyes, nose, or mouth you felt the same pain as when you touched a hot stove? Have you ever seen a child touch a hot stove? (We know you never did this as a child!) Did you observe how they reacted? More than likely the pain they experienced served as a reminder to never touch the stove again! Dr. Will’s “Do Not Touch the T-Zone” concept (tip 5) parallels the stove concept.
- Metaphorically speaking, we can burn ourselves by touching the T-Zone, the reaction merely manifests at a slower rate (often in the form of a viral infection that attacks our bodies 24-48 hours later). We need to train ourselves by using

tools that instantly and positively reinforce the 4<sup>th</sup> principle of Hand Awareness:

Do Not Touch the T-Zone (tip 5).

- This tip (1) reveals why the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness are so important.

The remaining tips in this report will focus only on developing a better understanding of true primary infection prevention techniques.

## **2) It is not about Handwashing alone. It is about Hand Awareness.**

The tip 2 heading has been a challenge for Public Health and for the CDC to convey to the general public.

- Although the phrase “Hand Awareness” has not been used much, the concept is reinforced in Food Safety principles.
- Many people are familiar with the different components of Hand Awareness, but far fewer people understand that Hand Awareness is the Best Practice in upper respiratory and gastro-intestinal infection prevention. Even in the cases of Hospital Acquired Infections, the hospitals still discuss hand hygiene and handwashing more commonly than Hand Awareness.
- Most of us know that handwashing is one of the best ways to safeguard against illness. As CDC and Prevention states, “Hand washing is the single most important method for preventing infectious disease”. Handwashing only temporarily rids our hands of germs. Many of us fail to realize that we easily contaminate our hands when we touch a surface (doorknob, side rail, countertop,

chart, drinking fountain, coffee pot, chair, desktop, faucet, handle, etc.) that might be contaminated by invisible organisms (viruses, bacteria, or fungi). It is virtually impossible to ensure that our hands never come in contact with a virulent organism (highly infectious germ), since these organisms are invisible.

- Hand Hygiene (includes handwashing, hand sanitizers and hand wipes) is only one part of Hand Awareness. Hand Awareness is defined as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cross contamination awareness. Hand Awareness is more simply defined as knowing where your hands are, and what they are doing at all times. We can assume that we will never truly know if we have a germ on our hand. Cross Contamination Awareness teaches us that when we touch our “T-Zone”, (eyes, nose, and mouth) we risk giving ourselves an infectious disease that we may have picked up since our last handwash (earlier that day).
- You are beginning to see why everyone needs to practice Hand Awareness within the home in order to truly achieve infection prevention.

### **3) Comply with and reinforce the 4 Principles of Hand**

#### **Awareness in your home.**

- The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness are:
  - 1) Wash your hands when they are dirty and before eating.
  - 2) Do not cough into your hands.
  - 3) Do not sneeze into your hands.
  - 4) Above all, do not put your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth.

The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness have been endorsed by the AMA (American Medical Association) & AAFP (American Academy of Family Physicians).

- Think back to your last respiratory or gastro-intestinal illness. Were your spirits better when you were sick or healthy? Were you more productive during your day when you were sick or healthy? You could have passed the illness around to each of your family members. Sickness could have lingered in your house anywhere from one to three weeks! Did you ever say to yourself, “I cannot wait to be healthy again!”? Did you promise yourself you would not repeat the same behavior that caused you to acquire the illness initially?
- In order to prevent yourself from getting an illness again, and in order to keep your household from harboring the germs that cause these illnesses in the future, you must take ownership of your health. Many people tend to naturally gravitate towards the opinions and advice of experts who give us a quick fix. Their quick fix solution is the flu vaccine. As discussed in tip 1, the flu vaccine does not prevent us from giving ourselves the flu! Infection prevention is not a quick fix. It is a continual commitment to following the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness.
- You’ve probably heard that the only variables we can control are our actions and our attitudes. Infection prevention follows this same principle. Maintaining the proper attitude and taking the proper steps WILL yield successful prevention of the spread of infectious illnesses in your home!

- You are most likely more passionate about preventing infection in your home than anyone else! That is why our goal is to partner with you and provide you with the best primary infection prevention tools possible. When we developed our program, we took into account your overbooked calendar, your obligation as a parent, and your non-stop lifestyle. Hand Awareness is not about interrupting your lifestyle, but about saving you from diverting time and energy away from your already busy lifestyle to tend to sick children, or deal with the repercussions of contracting an illness yourself.

#### **4) Promote the proper HAND behaviors in your home**

- Dr. Will Sawyer's knowledge of and research in Hand Awareness led him to construct a program, promoting behavior change through Positive Deviance strategies and reinforcement tools.
- This Hand Awareness program helps you improve your understanding of how infectious diseases spread. The program also empowers you to take ownership for your health by enabling you to utilize Henry the Hand® as a teaching tool to improve compliance with the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness.
- The program uses Positive Deviance strategies. Positive Deviance is an approach intended to create positive community change. This approach is based upon identifying Positive Deviants (or, individuals who use creative behaviors to achieve better results within the same environment) who can help the other community members achieve better results. With regards to health, Positive

Deviants are those who enjoy better health by practicing the best strategies and behaviors (the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness). Are you a Positive Deviant?

- Reinforcement tools serve as essential reminders to keep an individual on the right track, and continuing the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness. Without the reinforcement tools, many individuals will go back to old habits.
- You will see why the Hand Awareness program is truly the most effective primary infection prevention program in the world!
- Taking advantage of our resources, and maintaining a lifelong partnership with us, affords you and your family the best opportunity to decrease the incidence of respiratory and gastro-intestinal infection by reducing your risk of contaminating yourself.
- Remember to regularly wipe (decontaminate) commonly touched surfaces in your house to reduce the density of germs on the surfaces, and reduce the chance of giving yourself a germ if you touch the T Zone.
- Remember that food preparation in the home is the most common source of food-borne illness. Those who follow food safety standards reduce the chance of spreading germs. The root of the problem is a lack of compliance with temperature and hand awareness.
- Cross contamination by hands is a common cause of the spread of disease. For instance, “do not double dip”, or use your hand when serving yourself from a buffet bowl or dish. Always use a serving utensil.

## 5) Most importantly, “Do Not Touch the T-Zone”!

- Practice the 4<sup>th</sup> Principle of Hand Awareness, which is “Above all, do not put your fingers in your eyes, nose, or mouth!”
- The T-Zone refers to the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth. These mucous membranes are the ONLY portals of entry into your body for all respiratory or gastro-intestinal disease.
- Since you know it is virtually impossible to ensure that you never have a germ on your hand, make sure you do not stick your hand or finger in your T-Zone.
- As we alluded to earlier, there is a common misconception that someone else is responsible for giving us a germ. The only cases where we are not solely responsible for giving ourselves a germ are accidental T-Zone breeches, like an infant or toddler contaminating our T-Zone with their fingers. Otherwise, we are the culprits who put our own contaminated fingers in our T-Zone.
- When germs are airborne, they do NOT float around like feathers, but respond to gravity, and travel to surfaces, depending on their size. The facts in tip 5 reveal that we are primarily responsible for giving ourselves a germ.
- By practicing the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness, and particularly by practicing the 4<sup>th</sup> principle, we can prevent ourselves from giving ourselves a germ. Furthermore, we can prevent any pandemic, including the H1N1 Flu.

## **6) Spread the word not the germs!**

- The fastest, most effective form of advertisement is word of mouth. Think of the last time you went to a movie. Did you share your enthusiasm with someone about it? Did your opinion influence their decision to go see that film? The Henry the Hand® Infection Prevention program follows the same concept. You possess the power to influence others simply by sharing the message of Hand Awareness with friends, family members, students, employees, and co-workers.
- By empowering your friends, family members, students, employees, and co-workers to be more “Hand Aware” you will safeguard your own personal health. Herd (community) Immunity is the basic premise for ALL vaccination programs, and for this primary infection prevention program.

## **7) For the best infection prevention results in your home, influence other facilities in your community.**

- Think about how germs spread in your home (a facility). Within 24 hours of a family member contracting an illness, most of the commonly touched surfaces are contaminated with the germ that affects him or her. All it takes is a one person to start a chain reaction; if one person contaminates a surface with a germ, and then an unsuspecting person touches that surface, they will unknowingly perpetuate the contamination. As you have seen, with the case of the 2009 H1N1 related school closures, our hands spread these germs at a rapid rate. If we can make individuals in facilities more hand aware, and decrease the

amount of germs introduced to facilities, then we will drastically decrease the probability that an unsuspecting person will give him or herself a germ, or carry it to his or her home.

- Most schools are the center of every community. If the school's students are less ill from respiratory and gastro-intestinal diseases, then the community will also be less ill from these types of diseases. Unfortunately, many schools are experiencing a shortage in funding. We recommend helping these schools by finding a sponsor to fund the purchase of an Infection Prevention Tool Kit for the School.
- Positively influencing your local school is one of the best ways to decrease the spread of germs in your community. Children and adults who are not practicing ALL the Principles of Hand Awareness will spread and give themselves illnesses. These illnesses may force parents to stay home from work to tend to sick children, increasing those parents' risk of illness. Adults may then carry these germs to work or other surfaces within their community. Since most ill parents elect to attend work in spite of their illness, individuals who are not hand aware risk contracting germs in their work places. Talk about decreased productivity in the work place!
- Many facilities, besides your schools, in your community can benefit from improved Hand Awareness protection. Hospitals, workplaces, physicians' offices, eating establishments, religious institutions, and many others stand to improve

their well-being. Please encourage individuals at these facilities to learn about the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness.

## **Conclusion: Rely on us as your #1 resource for infection prevention guidance.**

By applying the *Top 7 Infection Prevention Tips for Your Home*, you will achieve better personal health and positively influence the health of your family and community. Our goal is to decrease the spread of infectious diseases by empowering individuals to educate and protect their communities.

Bottom line: we offer resources that empower you to keep yourself and your community healthy. By equipping yourself with our resources, and coupling them with the knowledge you've gained from the tips in this report, we are confident that you can effectively prevent the spread of infectious disease in your home. We invite you to use our website, subscribe to our *Infection Prevention eNews*, and use our Infection Prevention products. Email or call us anytime. Together we can make a difference!