

Are you Germophobic?

A recent issue of the Wellness Letter from the University of California at Berkeley featured a very timely article that we all can use. The title of the article is, "How germophobic should I be?" With the upcoming cold and flu season, I wanted to share some of the more important points made in the article so we can all enjoy a healthier fall and winter.

Wash your hands often. This includes before and after handling food, before putting in contact lenses or treating a wound, after using the toilet, after sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose, after changing a diaper, and after playing with a pet or clean-

ing a litter box. Covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough is another important preventive.

Be careful when flying. There is an increased risk of catching a cold when flying. This is often blamed on poor ventilation, but this is simply not true. The human proximity issue is the real culprit. It's usually the guy coughing or sneezing next to you, or you touching an object that a sick person recently handled. Frequent flyers should be frequent hand washers!

Use caution at the gym. Microbes thrive in warm, damp, environments found in many

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gyms, health clubs, and pools. Try not to touch your nose or mouth, or rub your eyes during your workout. Wear some sort of footwear in the locker room and shower areas to prevent athlete's foot. While germs on contact surfaces of the equipment can be spread, facilities that are properly cleaned and disinfected often have little risk, especially if you wash your hands after working out. And please keep in mind that worries about germs shouldn't keep you from the many positive

benefits of exercising in the gym.

Living involves sharing space and objects with other people. Some simple precautions, like hand washing, can make a huge difference in stopping the spread of germs. As simple as this sounds, a vast number of colds, flu, and ear infections can be prevented with some common sense changes. For parents with children in daycare, you know how germs can be disastrous to your home, as a child brings something home and then it spreads throughout the family. Children are more susceptible to colds (as well as the elderly) due to immune function. Remind your daycare providers to be mindful of germs.

I hope everyone enjoys the beautiful autumn weather in the

best of health. Let's keep our immune systems strong with eight to nine hours of sleep per night, eating healthy foods, and avoiding germs by applying these common sense suggestions.

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