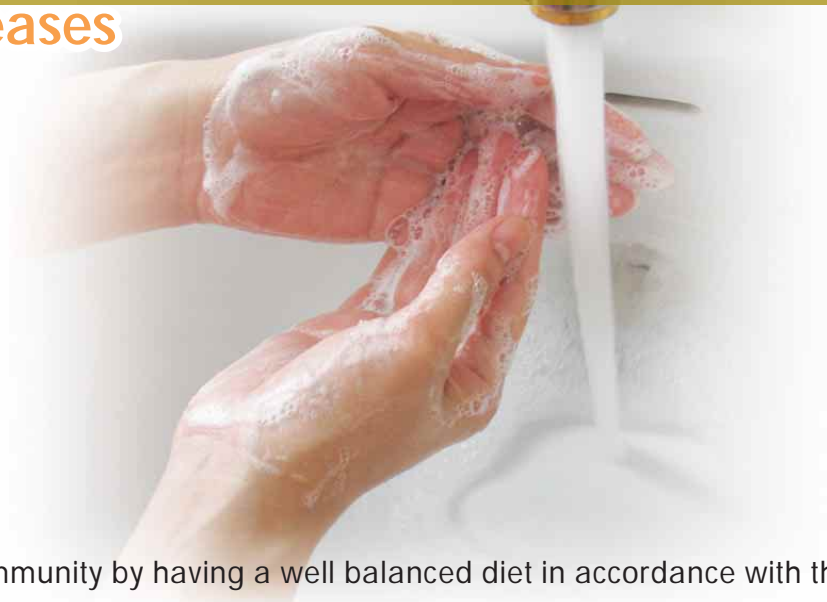


3 General guidelines on prevention of communicable diseases



Building up immunity by having a well balanced diet in accordance with the food pyramid, adequate rest and sleep, regular exercise and being a non-smoker are all vital to the prevention of communicable diseases. Moreover, good personal, food and environmental hygiene should be observed.

3.1 Personal hygiene

Since many communicable diseases are transmitted through direct contact, performing hand hygiene properly is a prerequisite for the prevention of such diseases. The persons-in-charge of a RCHE should provide the staff and residents with adequate facilities for performing hand hygiene.

3.1.1 RCHE staff should follow the procedures described in section 3.1.3 and [Appendix E](#) to perform hand hygiene:

- after sneezing or coughing;
- after using the toilet;
- before handling, preparing and serving food;
- when implementing any nursing procedures:
 - ✦ before and after having direct contact with residents
 - ✦ before handling an invasive device (e.g. urinary catheter) for resident care
 - ✦ after contacting blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, wounds or mucous membranes e.g. after diapering a resident or after cleaning the respiratory secretions of the residents
 - ✦ if moving from a contaminated body site to a clean body site during resident care
- after taking off the gloves;
- after contacting contaminated objects or environments.

(Note: 1. When hands are visibly soiled, handwashing should be performed. 2. When hands are not visibly soiled, application of alcohol-based handrub is equally effective. 3. Wearing gloves can never substitute for hand hygiene. Always perform hand hygiene after taking off the gloves.)

3.1.2 RCHE staff should encourage residents to wash their hands:

- before touching mouth, nose and eyes;
- before eating or handling food;
- after using the toilet;
- when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions, e.g. after coughing or sneezing;
- after touching public installations or equipment, such as escalator handrails, elevator control panels or door knobs;
- after changing diapers or handling soiled articles;
- after making contact with animals or poultry.



3.1.3 Proper procedures for handwashing (Appendix E):

Wash hands with liquid soap thoroughly according to the following procedures:

- Take off watches, rings and accessories to achieve best washing results.
- Wet hands under running water.
- Apply liquid soap and rub hands together to make a soapy lather.
- Away from the running water. Rub the palms, back of hands, between fingers, backs of fingers, thumbs, finger tips and wrists for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands thoroughly under running water after rubbing.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean cotton towel, a paper towel or a hand dryer.
- The tap may be turned off by wrapping the faucet with the paper towel, or clean the faucet after splashing with water or asking someone for assistance. Avoid touching the faucet again with washed hands.



Towels should never be shared and should be hung up immediately after use and washed thoroughly at least once a day.

- 3.1.4** Respiratory hygiene should also be observed (Appendix F). Do not spit. Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Sputum should be wrapped up with tissue paper and discarded into garbage bins with lids or flush them away in the toilet. Perform hand hygiene immediately after contacting respiratory secretions or touching objects contaminated with respiratory secretions. Put on a surgical mask for those with signs and symptoms of respiratory infection.

3.2 Food hygiene

3.2.1 Choice of food

- Buy fresh meat and vegetables.
- Do not patronize illegal food hawkers.
- Do not buy packaged food without proper labeling, beyond its expiry date or with damaged packages.
- Do not buy ready-to-eat food and drinks that are displayed together with raw products.
- Do not buy food which looks, smells or tastes abnormal.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products like raw milk.
- Do not buy excessive food to avoid problems arising from prolonged storage.

3.2.2 Preparation

- Wash hands properly before preparing food.
- Wear mask and washable or disposable aprons and cap during handling of cooked food.
- Protect wounds on hands with waterproof dressing to prevent passing infective agents from the wounds to food.
- Wash food thoroughly and scrub with a brush when appropriate.
- Handle/store raw foods and cooked foods separately. Use separate knives and chopping boards for each to avoid cross-contamination.
- Discard the outer leaves of leafy vegetables and immerse the vegetables in water for 1 hour before washing to eliminate possible pesticide residues.
- Frozen meat or fish must be thawed completely before cooking.



- Cook food thoroughly before consumption.
- Sample food with a clean spoon, not with fingers.
- Consume food as soon as it is cooked.
- Do not prepare too much food at one time to avoid wastage or overstocking.
- Cooked food taken out from the refrigerator should be reheated thoroughly before consumption.
- Do not touch cooked food with bare hands.
- Staff should not handle food if suffering from illnesses such as fever, diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Do not smoke while handling food.

3.2.3 Storage

- Store food in well-covered containers.
- Never leave perishable food at room temperature.
- Store perishable food in refrigerator immediately after purchase. Before refrigeration, pack the food into smaller portions if it is not intended for use in one go.
- Surplus food should preferably be disposed of, or stored in the refrigerator if need to be retained.
- Make sure that the refrigerator is clean and functioning properly, and clean it at regular intervals. Keep the temperature inside the refrigerator at or below 4°C and the freezer at or below -18°C. Each refrigerator should have a temperature log book with temperature recorded regularly.
- Avoid overcrowding to allow adequate ventilation inside the refrigerator.
- Do not wrap food with newspaper, unclean paper or coloured plastic bags.

RCHEs should implement the World Health Organization's ten principles for safe food preparation ([Appendix G](#)).

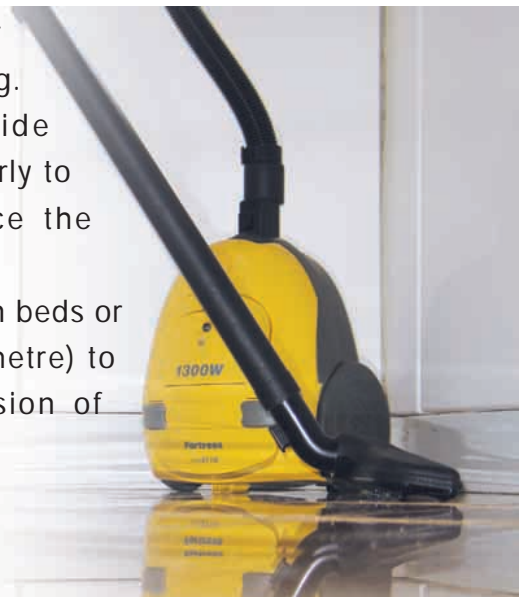


3.3 Environmental hygiene

Since infective agents can survive in the environment for a period of time, it is essential to observe environmental hygiene.

3.3.1 Keep the environment of RCHEs clean and hygienic:

- Always open the windows for good indoor ventilation. Fans/exhaust fans can be used to improve indoor ventilation.
- Clean the dust-filters of air-conditioners regularly.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, furniture, rehabilitation aids, floor, toilets and bathrooms regularly with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of 5.25% bleach with 99 parts of water) until dry and then rinse with water.
- For places soiled by secretions or excreta, disinfect with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 49 parts of water), leave for 15-30 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry.
- For spillage of blood, cleanse the visible matter with disposable absorbent material wetted with 1 in 4 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of 5.25% bleach with 4 parts of water), leave for 10 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry.
- Clean the floor regularly and increase the frequency as the circumstances require. The floor should be kept dry after cleaning so that residents and staff will not slip on it. Floor/carpets should be kept clean by regular washing and daily vacuum cleaning.
- Clean and examine the bedside cupboards of the residents regularly to avoid food remnants and hence the breeding of pests and rodents.
- Keep appropriate distance between beds or groups of beds (not less than 1 metre) to reduce the chance of transmission of infective agents by droplets.



- Empty water in the saucers underneath flower pots and change water in vases at least once a week. Top up all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of stagnant water and breeding of mosquitoes. To prevent rodent infestation, avoid stacking of unnecessary articles.
- Commence clean-up actions immediately when there are any signs of pest or rodent infestation such as excreta of rats, cockroaches, mosquitoes and flies. In case of need, call the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department hotline at 2868 0000 or relevant departments to follow up.
- For a hygienic environment, it is not advisable to keep pets like dogs and cats in the RCHE.

3.3.2 Maintain a clean and hygienic kitchen:

- Keep the kitchen clean; wash the exhaust fan and range hood regularly; and store eating utensils in a clean cupboard.
- Worktops in the kitchen should be kept clean.
- The floor should be kept dry after cleaning so that residents and staff will not slip over.
- Do not store personal items such as clothes and shoes in the kitchen.
- Cover garbage bins properly to avoid breeding of cockroaches, flies and rodents.



3.3.3 Cleaning and disinfection measures for toilets and bathrooms:

- Keep toilets and bathrooms clean and hygienic.
- Provide liquid soap and disposable paper towels or hand dryers for washing hands.
- Ensure the flushing system of the toilet is in proper function all the times.
- Make sure that the drain pipes are built with U-shaped water traps; do not alter the pipelines without authorization.
- Pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet regularly (about once a week) so as to maintain the water column in the pipe as water lock to prevent the spread of micro-organisms.
- Make sure that the soil pipes are unobstructed and the sewage drains are functioning properly without leakage so as to avoid breeding of infective agents.

3.3.4 Disposal of waste:

- Garbage bins should be covered with lids.
- Rubbish should be properly wrapped up and discarded into garbage bins with lids.
- Garbage bins should be emptied at least once a day. Staff should wash their hands thoroughly after handling refuse.

3.3.5 Floor mop/wiper and other cleaning utensils contaminated with body fluids or blood should be treated properly after use for re-use:

- Rinse floor mop/wiper or other cleaning utensils with water to remove solid/bulky waste if any.
- Disinfect such utensils by immersing them in 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (5.25%) for 30 minutes.
- Then wash with detergents and clean water.
- Re-use after drying out.

3.3.6 Choice of disinfectant

Generally speaking, household bleach, which normally contains 5.25% available chlorine, is the most convenient and effective disinfectant. 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (5.25%) is sufficient for general cleaning purpose though 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (5.25%) should be used for places contaminated with excreta or secretions. Besides, many detergents on the market claim to have a disinfectant composition. Purchasers should check whether the claim is genuine and should note the directions for use because the effectiveness of different disinfectants will be different. (Please refer to [Appendix H1](#) for details.)



3.4 Vaccination

Elders suffering from influenza will develop fatal complications more easily. Therefore, unless vaccination is contra-indicated, residents and staff should be encouraged to receive influenza vaccination provided by the Department of Health to enhance their immunity and help prevent complications caused by influenza.