

COVERING YOUR COUGH

Why should I cover my cough?

- Respiratory illnesses like influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and pertussis (whooping cough) are spread by coughing or sneezing.
- These infections can be spread to others when the ill person coughs or sneezes into their hands and then contaminates surfaces and objects.
- Respiratory illnesses spread easily in crowded places where people are in close contact.

How do I stop the spread of germs if I am sick?

- Turn away from other people before coughing or sneezing.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue in a waste basket.
- If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or inner elbow instead of your hands.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after wiping or blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels, or other personal items.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that could be contaminated by ill people, such as doorknobs, tables, handrails, sinks, toys, etc.

How can I stay healthy?

- Clean your hands **often** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Get vaccinated. Influenza (flu), pneumococcal (pneumonia), and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccines can prevent some serious respiratory illnesses.

When you are at the clinic or hospital:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of the used tissue in the waste basket.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Wear a mask to protect others if you are asked.

Visual Aids

Minnesota Department of Health “Cover your Cough” Posters:

[Cover Your Cough Poster for Health Care- Minnesota Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.state.mn.us/health/cough/)

