



Ahh-Choo!

Learning About Germs

Did You Know?

- Most germs are passed from hand to hand through fomites, inanimate objects that carry germs.
- Germs can live on fomites for a few minutes or for many hours. Less personal items, or ones that we don't hold in our hands or use for our eyes or mouths, are less likely to have germs. Items that we hold, or items that we put in our mouths or on our faces, are more likely to carry germs.
- There are more fomites in the kitchen than in any other room, including the bathroom! 80% of germs are passed by touching surfaces, and children can touch up to 300 surfaces in just 30 minutes in the classroom!
- Germs like warm, wet spaces, like tissues, sponges, and dish cloth, but they also like places that are frequently touched, like faucet handles, doorknobs, and toys.
- It takes 30 seconds of vigorous hand washing to combat the little germies. Most of us don't wash our hands as often or as long as we should!

Science in the Classroom

- Identify the places in your classroom that are most likely to harbor germs. Make a list of them, or mark them with special stickers to draw children's attention.
- Count aloud to 30 slowly while practicing hand-washing to reinforce how long it takes to wash our hands thoroughly. Draw children's attention to the sides of fingers and finger nails when washing hands.
- Place a washable dot-paint container near to the classroom sink. Let children dot their hands once prior to washing... when the dot is scrubbed off, it will be time to rinse their hands.
- Sort images of immune-building foods (like fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) and immune-depleting foods (like processed sugars, candies, and white flour) into "Germ-fighting" and "Germ-friendly" categories.
- Observe how germs can move through the classroom by covering a pencil with glue, rolling it in glitter and then passing it from child to child. Track where the glitter goes in the room, and notice how even if you wipe it off with a towel, there is still glitter on the towel and on the pencil! Only washing it off with soap and water works for sure.
- Spray children's hands with cooking spray and then sprinkle paprika on their hands. Wash hands with cold water and see what happens. Wash them again with warm soapy water to see the difference that proper hand washing makes.