

# Cleaning Tips to Keep Your Home and Health in Check



COVID-19 taught us the importance of cleaning and disinfecting to reduce the risk of getting sick. But with cold and flu season in full force, as well as RSV, hand-foot-mouth disease, and the COVID virus (still), it is more important than ever to reevaluate hygiene habits!

Consider these general cleaning tips.

1. Clean regularly with soap and water or a sanitizing spray to reduce germs on surfaces, which decreases the risk of infection. Focus on high-touch surfaces such as light switches, doorknobs, and countertops. If someone in your household has been ill, or someone who has been in your home within the last 24 hours becomes ill, consider using a disinfectant as well.
2. Wear a mask when cleaning areas where a sick person has

been. Open windows and use fans to increase airflow.

3. Don't forget the things we learned during COVID. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer when water and soap are unavailable, cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, avoid close contact with sick people, and don't share personal items. Immunize yourself from infectious diseases, and stay home when you do not feel well.

What about cleaning and disinfecting items that are used daily? Can you reinfect yourself with items such as a toothbrush or a reusable water bottle? Consider this information.

**Toothbrushes** – It is recommended that you replace your toothbrush after an illness due to the chance of becoming reinfected, but professionals agree this isn't typically true for viruses. After your body has fought off a virus such as the flu or COVID, your immune system will usually develop the necessary protection to prevent reinfection.

However, it is possible to infect others if a contaminated toothbrush comes in contact with another toothbrush. Additionally, a toothbrush can cause reinfection of a bacterial illness, such as strep throat, where bacteria can colonize if the bristles do not dry completely. Because of this, many professionals agree you should replace a toothbrush after a bacterial illness. The CDC recommends replacing your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months under general circumstances. But if you've been ill and don't want to take a risk, buy a new toothbrush.

**Water bottles** – If your water bottle is dishwasher safe, the dishwasher should be your go-to. If not, Michigan State University Extension recommends washing the bottle each day in hot water with a teaspoon of unscented dish soap to

reduce the risk of illness from bacterial growth. Soak the bottle in soapy water for a few minutes, rinse it well in warm water, and allow it to completely dry before the next use. Avoid letting your water bottle sit with water in it for lengthy periods.