



Information Sheet H: Respiratory hygiene

Why is respiratory hygiene important?

- The virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is spread by droplets from the mouth and nose. These droplets spread when we breathe, talk, cough, sneeze etc.
- Most of the droplets fall quickly to the nearest surface. If another person touches this surface, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes, they can become infected with COVID-19.
- So it is important to catch your coughs and sneezes so the infectious droplets cannot contaminate surfaces and spread to other people.

Excellent respiratory hygiene means:

- Catching coughs and sneezes in a disposable tissue. If you don't have a tissue, use the crook of your elbow.
- Single use, disposable tissues should be readily available and once used should be disposed of straight away in the nearest bin.
- Washing your hands using soap and water (if not available, use alcohol-based hand rub) after sneezing, coughing, using tissues or after any contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects.
- Hand hygiene facilities should be readily available with foot-operated waste bins.
- Keeping your hands away from eyes, mouth, nose and from the front of any face covering.