

HYGIENE AT HOME: HOW TO STAY SAFE THIS CHRISTMAS



ABSTARCT

Good hygiene in your home keeps your living spaces clean, healthy and comfortable. Hygiene products designed specifically for the home play a vital role in keeping living areas, food preparation areas, bathrooms and bedrooms clean and comfortable, as well as efficiently cleaning your laundry items. These products help make household chores as quick and painless as possible, giving you time to spend enjoying other activities.

Having a clean, hygienic home also helps to make it a relaxing place to unwind, or to welcome and entertain guests.

INTRODUCTION

You are unlikely to pick up pathogens from the living spaces in your home. But keeping these areas clean and free from debris, dust, dust mites and animal hair can make them more comfortable environments to be in, as well as healthier.

I. Personal hygiene

What is personal hygiene?

Good personal hygiene is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting gastro or infectious diseases such as COVID-19, colds and flu. Washing your hands with soap removes germs that can make you ill. Maintaining good personal hygiene will also help prevent you from spreading diseases to other people.



Personal hygiene includes:

- cleaning your body every day
- washing your hands with soap after going to the toilet

- brushing your teeth twice a day
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue (or your sleeve) when sneezing or coughing
- washing your hands after handling pets and other animals

To slow the spread of COVID-19, you should:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- clean and disinfect surfaces you use often such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs
- clean and disinfect objects you use often such as mobile phones, keys, wallets and work passes
- increase the amount of fresh air by opening windows or changing air conditioning

Why is personal hygiene important?

Good hygiene is vital because it helps prevent you and your children from getting or spreading germs and infectious diseases. The germs that cause many diseases can be passed on through touching other people, getting faeces (poo) on your hands, handling contaminated food, or coming into contact with dirty surfaces or objects.



Conditions that you can develop if you have poor personal hygiene include:

- COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

- diarrhoea, especially gastroenteritis
- respiratory infections, including colds and flu
- staph infections
- worm-related conditions, such as threadworms
- scabies
- trachoma, an eye infection which can lead to blindness
- tinea or athlete's foot
- tooth decay

Washing your body

Try to bathe or shower each day. Wash well, especially under your armpits and around your genitals and anus. Keeping clean will prevent skin irritations and remove bacteria that cause body odour.

Wash yourself with soap, shower gel or a hypoallergenic body wash. Soap removes more germs, but you may need to wash sensitive body parts with plain water or salt water.

If there is no tap water or it is scarce, clean yourself with a clean wet cloth or sponge.

Washing your hands

To avoid getting sick, wash your hands properly for at least 20 seconds.



- Wet your hands with water.
- Apply enough soap to cover all surfaces of your hands.

- Rub your palms together.
- Clean between the fingers and the back of your hands.
- Clean dirty nails with a scrubbing brush, if one is available.
- Rinse both sides of your hands, preferably under clean running water.
- Dry off your hands with a clean towel.
- Use the towel to turn off the tap.

You can also use hand sanitiser. Make sure you use enough of the product to cover all surfaces of your hands. Make sure you rub the palms, backs of the hands and in between your fingers.

When to wash your hands

It is especially important to wash your hands after going to the toilet because faeces, which you might come into contact with, contains billions of germs. Also, wash your hands:

- before and after eating or preparing food
- after changing babies' nappies
- before and after touching a sick person or cleaning up vomit or body fluids
- after blowing your nose
- before and after treating cuts or wounds
- after touching rubbish, dirty surfaces or objects
- after handling pets or farm animals

Washing your genitals

Men who are uncircumcised can clean their penis by gently pulling back the foreskin and washing underneath it with warm water or soap. See more here about penis care.

Women can gently wash the delicate skin around the vulva with a soap-free wash, salt water or plain water. Avoid perfumed soap and bath products since these may

irritate the sensitive skin of the vulva. Do not douche, because it upsets the healthy bacteria in the vagina.

During menstruation (your periods), wash your vulva as usual. Tampons can be changed every 3 to 4 hours. To avoid toxic shock syndrome, do not leave a tampon in for a long time, and never insert more than one tampon at a time. Change sanitary pads several times a day. Wash your hands before and after changing tampons or pads.

Preventing body odour

After washing, apply deodorant to your armpits. Put on clean, dry clothing. Wash sweaty or dirty garments well and, if possible, hang them outdoors to dry. If you have a problem with excessive sweating, make an appointment to see your doctor.

Handling food safely

Wash your hands before and after preparing food. This will stop you contaminating food and will also protect you from getting ill or passing on bacteria from foodstuffs, such as raw meat. Find out more here about food safety.

Preventing bad breath

Bad breath can be caused by poor oral hygiene. Brush and floss your teeth twice a day since this reduces gum disease and the chances of future tooth decay. Use these dental care tips and make an appointment with a dentist for a check-up if you have further symptoms.



II. Creating a Personal Hygiene Routine: Tips and Benefits

What is personal hygiene?

Personal hygiene is how you care for your body. This practice includes bathing, washing your hands, brushing your teeth, and more.

Every day, you come into contact with millions of outside germs and viruses. They can linger on your body, and in some cases, they may make you sick. Personal hygiene practices can help you and the people around you prevent illnesses. They can also help you feel good about your appearance.

Learn more about why hygiene is so important, the best ways to practice it, and how you can change your habits to make yourself feel and look better.

Types of personal hygiene

Each person's idea of personal hygiene differs. These main categories are a useful place to start for building good hygiene habits:

Toilet hygiene

Wash your hands after you use the restroom. Scrub with soap for 20 to 30 seconds, and be sure to clean between your fingers, on the back of your hands, and under your nails. Rinse with warm water, and dry with a clean towel.

If you don't have running water or soap, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer will also work. Use one that's at least 60 percent alcohol.

Shower hygiene

Personal preference may dictate how often you wish to shower, but most people will benefit from a rinse at least every other day. Showering with soap helps rinse away dead skin cells, bacteria, and oils.

You should also wash your hair at least twice a week. Shampooing your hair and scalp helps remove skin buildup and protects against oily residues that can irritate your skin.

Nail hygiene

Trim your nails regularly to keep them short and clean. Brush under them with a nail brush or washcloth to rinse away buildup, dirt, and germs.

Tidying your nails helps you prevent spreading germs into your mouth and other body openings. You should also avoid biting your nails.

Teeth hygiene

Good dental hygiene is about more than just pearly white teeth. Caring for your teeth and gums is a smart way to prevent gum diseases and cavities.



Brush at least twice a day for 2 minutes. Aim to brush after you wake up and before bed. If you can, brush after every meal, too. Floss between your teeth daily, and ask your dentist about using an antibacterial mouthwash.

These two steps can help prevent tooth decay and eliminate pockets where bacteria and germs can build up.

Sickness hygiene

If you're not feeling well, you should take steps to keep from spreading germs to others. This includes covering your mouth and nose when sneezing, wiping down shared surfaces with an antibacterial wipe, and not sharing any utensils or electronics. Also, immediately throw away any soiled tissues.

Hands hygiene

Germs on your hands can easily enter your body through your mouth, nose, eyes, or ears. Wash your hands:

- when you handle food
- before you eat
- if you handle garbage
- when you sneeze
- any time you touch an animal

Likewise, wash your hands after changing a baby's diaper, helping someone clean themselves, or when cleaning a cut or wound.

Personal hygiene for kids

Good personal hygiene will help your kids stay healthy, ward off illnesses, and build better self-awareness.

It's never too early to start teaching hygiene. You can wipe down your child's hands after changing their diapers or before eating, brush their teeth and gums before bed, and get them into a daily bath routine. This helps you begin the process and slowly teaches them as they grow and take over the process.

Here's a list of hygiene activities, how you can introduce them, and when is a good time to start:

Brushing teeth

You can begin brushing your baby's teeth and gums the moment the first tooth pops up. They can brush their own teeth by about 3 years old. However, you may have to stay with them to guarantee they're doing a good job and brushing long enough.

Play a 2-minute song when it's time to brush teeth. That will let your little one know how long they have to brush, and they'll get used to the process. Likewise, you may have to continue flossing for them until they're older and can handle that task better, around age 7.

Bathing

You'll be giving your baby baths regularly, but by about age 5, they should be able to handle this task on their own. As they're growing and you're supervising bath time, you should take the opportunity to teach about washing all the different body parts, especially:

- armpits
- groins
- neck
- belly
- knees

- elbows
- back
- feet

You can also use this time to teach them how to wash their hair without getting suds in their eyes — and what to do if they do.

Hand washing

Wipe your baby's hands with a warm washcloth before mealtime, after eating, and after changing a diaper. During potty training, make washing hands an integral step in the process.

You can teach your child to sing the ABC song while they wash — it's 20 seconds long, which is an ideal washing time.

Make it a priority to ask your child to wash their hands any time you'd like to encourage good hygiene, like before meals, after playing outside, after petting an animal, or after being near a sick friend.

Nail hygiene

You'll clip your child's nails when they're a baby, but as they grow older, you can help them care for their own nails. Encourage your children to wash under their nails at each shower — a fun nail brush will help. Then, sit down with them weekly after a shower for a trim. Your nails are softer and clip more easily after a shower.

By age 7, most children should be up for the task alone.

Side effects of poor personal hygiene

Good personal hygiene habits are directly related to less illnesses and better health. Poor personal hygiene habits, however, can lead to some minor side effects, like body odor and greasy skin. They can also lead to more troublesome or even serious issues.

For example, if you don't wash your hands frequently, you can easily transfer germs and bacteria to your mouth or eyes. This can lead to any number of issues, from stomach viruses to pink eye.

Not brushing your teeth can lead to teeth issues and plaque buildup. Poor dental care is also a risk factor for several serious health issues, including heart disease.

Poor hygiene habits can also affect your self-esteem. Looking and feeling presentable can give you a confidence boost and a sense of pride in your appearance.

Other conditions may be prevented or the risk minimized by practicing good personal hygiene. These are some examples:

- scabies
- pubic lice
- head lice
- body lice
- diarrhea
- athlete's foot
- ringworm
- pinworms
- swimmer's ear
- hot tub rash

Creating a personal hygiene routine

If you want to improve your personal hygiene or help a child develop better habits, these strategies might be helpful:

Set reminders

If you can't remember to do things like shower, wash your hair, clip your nails, or brush your teeth, set a reminder on your phone. The cue will push you to the activity, and over time, you'll begin to do it yourself.

Use signs

Hang a reminder in the bathroom to wash your hands after using the toilet. Put a little sign by the plates or bowls in the kitchen to cue yourself to wash your hands before eating. These signs can help jog your memory and improve your habits. They can help both you and your children.

Practice makes perfect

It takes time to learn a new habit. Start with a new habit at the beginning of the week and make it your priority. Practice it for a week or two. When you feel comfortable with it, add a new one. Overtime, you'll establish the habits you wish to have.

Building good personal hygiene habits takes a lifetime of learning and honing. Caring for yourself in these manners is good for your physical health as well as your mental health. If you find it difficult to adapt to these practices, talk with your doctor or dentist.

Sometimes, explanations and demonstrations are a good jump-start for taking better care of yourself. This is especially true for kids. A doctor can better explain the consequences of not caring for yourself, and a parent can use them as backup for building habits that will last a lifetime.

III. Christmas cleaning tasks: is your home ready for guests?

Get on Santa's good list with our christmas cleaning task countdown, plus jobs you'll need to do after the holiday festivities



As your home tends to see more guests over the festive period – especially if you are hosting Christmas dinner – the whole family feels the pressure to keep the house tidy. In an online study of 2,000 people, AO.com found that 89% of us admitted to spending more time cleaning during the Christmas period.

The research revealed that Brits spend an average of four and a half hours cleaning their homes for Christmas day, with just under half (47%) saying this was to prepare

for guests. Over half (56%) stated that they could only relax at home once the house was clean, too.

However, many of us seem to be short on time to do what we deem to be a proper job, with 40% hiding mess rather than properly tidying and 24% of people said they used a fabric freshening spray instead of washing their clothes or textiles – nice...

So, are you someone who wants to spend less time cleaning and more time having fun this Christmas? Or do you leave everything until the guests are at the door and have perfected lobbing stuff into the cupboard under the stairs on the way to answer it? Either way, ticking these top cleaning tasks* off your list will get your home cleaner and tidier in no time.

1. Dust the surfaces

This is the top job featured in most people's pre-Christmas clean with 77% of us making sure we do it before the big day. To speed the job up, put the soft brush attachment on your vacuum cleaner to get rid of most of the dust. Then follow with a microfibre cloth or duster.

Don't forget furniture too which many of us spend extra time on at this time of year. And when you're vacuuming down the side of the armchair remember that 70% of Brits are probably busy doing the same.

2. Vacuum carpets

Three quarters of us make sure we do this ahead of Christmas and if your kids love opening their presents sitting on the floor, it is a must.

3. Mop the floors

After vacuuming, 67% of us then reach for the mop to give those hard floors a good clean. This is essential to get rid of bacteria and marks that your vacuum won't beat.

4. Clean bathrooms

Your guests definitely don't want to use a grubby loo or wash their hands in a dirty sink. Fortunately, 64% of us know this and make cleaning the bathroom of high importance. If you hate using strong chemicals, see our pick of the best eco-friendly cleaning products.



And, if you have guests staying overnight, make sure your showerhead gets a good scrubbing. We recommend using Astonish The Good One cleaning paste(opens in new tab) to make sure yours is free from limescale. The mint smell throughout adds to any festive fragrances like After Eight mint chocolates!

It goes without saying that bottomless offerings of Turkey, all the trimmings and several helpings of canapes, cheese, and dessert need to go somewhere, so when nature calls, make sure you clean the toilet often (using the best toilet cleaner) and that you know how to keep a clean lavatory brush.

5. Wash bed sheets

Good news for guests – 52% of us realize the importance of freshly laundered or brand new bed sheets at this time of year. Don't forget to wash your own bed sheets, too.

6. Clean the fridge

Make room for the Christmas food shop and get rid of the chutney that has been lurking in the fridge since last Christmas. Over half of us (52%) make sure we clean the fridge in time for Christmas.

Though Dr Beckmann's fridge cleaner is a fairly budget and food-safe solution to spray inside your refrigerator, cleaning with baking soda, or deodorizing with lemon is super frugal if you've gone OTT on gifting!

7. Clean windows

What is the point of filling your windows with fairy lights if they can barely be seen through the murky panes? At this time of year, 51% of us clean the windows and it

should come as no surprise that it actually makes your interiors feel a little brighter too.

If you can't afford to have them professionally cleaned, these budget-friendly window cleaning solutions will have them looking good as new.

8. Clean the oven

Exactly half of us clean our ovens ready for Christmas dinner cooking. It can be an intimidating job if you have let food burn to the racks and base, so take the stress out of Christmas cleaning with our guides... we've even got separate tutorials on cleaning oven racks and making sure you can see your reflection through a clean glass oven door.



9. Tidy cupboards

While it wasn't clear from the study which cupboards 46% of us clean at Christmas, we would recommend making space in kitchen cupboards by clearing out old food. Also, give your wardrobes a clear if you can (homeless shelters are grateful for any winter clothing you might have) and tidy that cupboard under the stairs that is full of unpaired shoes and *Yellow Pages* from the nineties.

10. Recycle items

For many this is a weekly task, but apparently 41% of us make an extra effort at Christmas. Check your local authority site to see what can and can't be recycled, and remember to rinse tins and plastic food containers before putting them in the recycling bin.

11. Clean up any vomit

The holidays usually allow for more space for food and beverages, and while we're usually sensible with our alcohol consumption, there's always someone that takes their tippie tolerance to the edge... Hello, head to toilet seat.

Puke, vom whatever you want to call it - be prepared to clean up vomit. As you might know, spew doesn't smell great and can linger, so it's best to mask it with a good air freshener.

IV. 7 Germ-Busting Cleaning Tips For Your Home

Good hygiene practices are crucial to have a clean and healthy home. Besides maintaining optimal personal hygiene, you must sanitise and disinfect household areas routine to keep germs at bay. If you fail to clean your home regularly, your home will become a hub of dangerous pathogens that cause infectious diseases. It is because a single bacterium can make a population of 500,000 bacteria in 8 hours.



Additionally, viruses can survive on surfaces for hours and days. An unclean home can also cost you the bond money at the end of the tenancy because renters are obligated to keep and leave rental premises reasonably clean. Hire professional end of lease cleaners in Canberra to get your bond back.

However, develop a daily house cleaning routine to maintain general cleanliness at your house. Also, use these 7 germ-busting cleaning tips for your home.

Steam Clean Household Surfaces

Steam quickly reaches over 300° Celsius temperature, making it effective against almost every type of bacteria, virus and mould. It can instantly kill even the strongest

pathogens like E. Coli and Salmonella. Steam cleaning effectively sanitises floors, countertops, upholstery, carpets, beddings, baseboards etc.

Therefore, cleaners who offer affordable end of lease cleaning Canberra often use steam cleaning techniques to tackle stubborn grime and stains.

Invest in an energy-efficient steam cleaner with a mop head and multiple other attachments to disinfect every surface, fixture and object in your home. Just make sure to read the equipment usage precautions to avoid injury or damage to the thing you want to clean.

Make A Simple Cleaning Caddy

The most effective way to control disease-causing microbes in your home is by sanitising and disinfecting frequently. Make a simple cleaning caddy to manage these tasks quickly and without hassle. Get a large container with sections to keep a multiple-purpose cleaner, a natural disinfectant, microfiber cloths, sponges, Mr Clean Magic Eraser and other products/tools that will come in handy.



If you have a multi-storey home, create separate caddies for each level. You can also keep different caddies for rooms that need more attention.

For example, the bathroom and the kitchen have the dirtiest surfaces and require stronger cleaners. Thus, you must have specific caddies with suitable supplies to clean the bathroom and kitchen.

Wash Towels, Beddings & Covers Weekly

Cushion covers, pillowcases, bedsheets, hand towels, bath towels and other fabric items that constantly come in contact with us are among the germiest things inside the house. They are home to millions of microbes, and when they remain unwashed for prolonged periods, they smell bad and increase the risk of diseases & infections.

Thus, you must wash towels, bedding, and fabric cover every week to keep them fresh and germ-free. You can launder commonly and frequently used items more than once a week as well. Just make sure to use a mild detergent and a fabric disinfectant to prevent the items from wearing quickly.

Regularly Sanitise High-Touch Surfaces/Items

Germs transfer the fastest from one household member to another via high-touch surfaces or items. If you don't clean and disinfect them, especially after a family member falls sick, the risk of other household members falling sick increases exponentially.

Therefore, you must wipe high-touch points in your home daily with a versatile cleaner and disinfect them. If you don't know which surfaces or items to sanitise, refer to the list below.

- Taps, handles, knobs and rails.
- Countertops, slabs and shelves.
- Keyboards, mouse, remote controls and mobile phones.
- Handles and buttons of common kitchen appliances like coffee maker, stove, oven, microwave etc.
- Countertops, tables, slabs and shelves.
- Windows and doors.

Clean The Sink

The kitchen sink harbours the most germs in your home because it comes in contact with dirt, grime, bacteria, mould and viruses. According to research, a kitchen sink has Staph, E. coli, Salmonella, and other pathogens responsible for food-borne illnesses.



Therefore, develop the habit of scrubbing the sink with soap and washing it with warm water. Use a commercial disinfectant or make one at home by mixing one part of bleach with ten parts of water.

Pro-tip: Never leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight. Load the dishwasher at night and unload clean dishes in the morning.

Use TGA-Approved Cleaners & Disinfectants

The therapeutic goods administration is an Australian regulatory body, and products having its approval meet certain standards. Therefore, while getting cleaners and disinfectants for your home, always choose brands approved by TGA. Buying non-regulated products cannot guarantee they will clean household surfaces or kill germs in your home.

Additionally, they can contain dangerous chemicals that cause cancers, skin burns, chronic respiratory diseases and many other ailments.

Therefore, always check the back of products to ensure they are TGA-approved before purchasing them. Even professional end of lease cleaners in Canberra use regulated products to clean homes safely.

Give Disinfectants Proper Dwell Time

Like cleaners, disinfectants also need a specific time to kill bacteria, viruses and fungi effectively. If a disinfectant dries or you wipe it away before this time is over, your household surfaces and fixtures remain germ.

By letting disinfectants work, you can eliminate germs effectively and have a healthy home at all times. Therefore, after cleaning anything in your home, apply the

disinfectant generously and let it dwell for at least 5-10 minutes. Reapply the product if it dried before the dwell time.



Germ is a part of every house, but they become an issue when you don't sanitise your home regularly. Therefore, you must sanitise your house daily and thoroughly deep clean it.

Also, use the insights above to bust germs like a pro. But, when ending a tenancy, hire professionals for end of lease cleaning in Canberra to ensure the rental property is reasonably clean and ready for the final inspection.

V. Use This Holiday Cleaning Checklist to Get Ready for Guests

Holiday hosting involves a lot of prep work. Once you've decked the halls and completed a grocery list for your favorite holiday dishes, there are still a few important tasks to check off your list.



Before guests arrive, you need to clean your home to get it company-ready. Although you don't have to deep-clean your home from top to bottom, you should

tidy up the spaces you know guests will frequent. That includes the entryway, main living areas, kitchen, and any bathroom visitors will use.

The most important thing is to make sure these areas appear clean and clutter-free; you don't need to go overboard scrubbing and organizing every inch of space. A little strategic holiday cleaning and decluttering will go a long way. You can spend less time with a vacuum and scrub brush and more time enjoying the company of those you love.

To help you sort through which tasks are worth your limited time and attention during this busy season, we have a holiday cleaning checklist that guides you through each room of your home. Refer to this list to prioritize cleaning duties and finish the job as quickly as possible. Although it's particularly helpful around the holidays, this house cleaning checklist can also come in handy anytime you're hosting guests.

Holiday Cleaning Checklist for Your Entryway

An entryway offers the first impression of your home as guests arrive. So, in addition to decking the space with holiday decor, take the time to clean and organize your entryway before gatherings. Follow this holiday cleaning checklist and give visitors a warm (and tidy) welcome.



- Pick up clutter near the door
- Designate a spot for guests' coats, boots, and shoes
- Wipe down walls to remove scuffs and marks
- Use glass cleaner to remove fingerprints from windows and doors
- Shovel the front walk, if necessary

Holiday Cleaning Checklist for Living Areas

Holiday gatherings typically center around main living areas, such as dining and living rooms. Determine which rooms guests are likely to congregate in and focus your holiday cleaning efforts there. Then, ensure these spaces look their best with a quick once-over before the doorbell rings.



- Vacuum or sweep and mop floors
- Spot-clean any stains on carpet or furniture
- Wipe down surfaces with a microfiber duster or damp cloth
- Put away any items that don't belong in the room
- If you're short on time, load the items into a basket and stash it somewhere until you have time to put them away.
- Fluff pillows and sofa cushions and neatly fold throw blankets

Kitchen Holiday Cleaning Tasks

If your holiday festivities include food, there's a good chance your kitchen will be on display for guests to see. To quickly clean your kitchen, focus on the problem areas that are most visibly messy. This kitchen cleaning checklist will prep your space for holiday hosting.

- Declutter and wipe down countertops
- Vacuum or sweep floors
- Clear any dirty dishes from the sink and clean the basin
- Wipe down kitchen appliances

- Replace kitchen hand towels
- Make room in the refrigerator for leftovers

Holiday Cleaning Checklist for the Bathroom

Freshen up the bathroom guests are most likely to use, which might be a first-floor powder room or a guest bathroom. If your visitors are spending the night, make sure the bathroom is also stocked with plenty of supplies, including extra towels and toiletries. Follow this checklist to prep your bathroom for the holidays.



- Clean mirrors to remove streaks and water spots
- Clear clutter and personal products from the vanity
- Wipe down the sink and countertops
- Put out fresh hand towels
- Sweep or mop the floor
- Give the toilet a quick scrub with a toilet brush
- Refill the soap dispenser and set out extra toiletries

If you've finished these holiday cleaning tasks and still have some time, set the mood by lighting a candle, putting on some music, and programming the thermostat to a comfortable temperature. These extra touches will help set a festive tone and make you feel more comfortable knowing your home is clean and ready for the event.

CONCLUSION

Cleaning and disinfecting your home are effective ways to prevent the spread of disease and illness. Maintaining safe cleaning habits helps remove most germs, such as harmful viruses or bacteria, on household surfaces.

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