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## Health in the Workplace

Germ-Free Zone

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Disinfectants and Sanitizers



# City of McAllen

# Benefits Department Newsletter

Current Topics >>>

## Disinfectants and Sanitizers

### Top 10 dirty sites in the home:

1. Sponge or Counter Wiping Cloth
2. Kitchen Sink Drain
3. Tub - Bathroom
4. Toilet Bowl ( Under Rim )
5. Toilet Floor
6. Kitchen Floor
7. Kitchen Faucet Handle
8. Bathroom Sink
9. Pet Food Dish
10. Kitchen Table Top

In order to get rid of germs it is important to stick to products that disinfect or sanitize. Most brands sell disinfectant and sanitizing products in the form of wipes or sprays (both will get the job done). Sanitizers should be used on food contact surfaces. Objects that might be put in the mouth, such as toys for children, should also be sanitized as opposed to disinfected. Hard surfaces, such as door knobs and counters, should be disinfected. Always check with a health care professional before using products that may cause allergic reactions.



## How to Keep a Germ-Free Zone

*You were probably aware that the flu and colds are caused by the spread of germs, but did you know that many of these germs live in the office? There are many ways to prevent the spread of germs, and after reading this article you will know ways to protect yourself and others.*

The number one way to prevent a cold or flu is to get vaccinated. Vaccinations might help most germs from infecting the immune system, but not all germs are eliminated. For this reason, it is important to prevent the spread of germs as much as possible. Sometimes, the hardest part of reducing the spread of germs is not knowing where to start. The fact is that germs are everywhere, specifically in areas that are shared by many people. Although preventing 100% of germs is practically impossible, there are a few steps that can be followed to reduce the spread of germs.

**1. Call in sick at the first sign of flu or cold symptoms.** Viruses can easily spread in close areas like offices. Stay home if you have any of following symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea

**2. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.** If you cough or sneeze, try to do it in a tissue and throw it away. If there is no tissue around, cover your sneeze/cough with fold of your arm. Immediately sanitize hands when you are done.

**3. Wash your hands often** with soap and warm water. Rub your hands for 15 to 20 seconds. Soap combined with a vigorous scrubbing action is what removes germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gels. If you are using a gel sanitizer, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry to ensure that germs are removed. Germs can survive for as much as two hours on surfaces such as door knobs and desktops. For this reason it is especially important to wash hand frequently.

**4. Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches objects that are contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

**5. Wipe down your desk and other common areas with disinfectant wipes.** Telephones, desks, water fountain handles, microwave door handles, and computer keyboards in offices contain large amounts of the germs that cause the cold and flu. Following these tips can prevent unnecessary trips to the doctor and high medical bills. Remember that you are not only trying to keep yourself healthy, but others as well. Most importantly, stay conscious of your surroundings because germs lurk in the places that we least expect.

# Ways You Can Avoid Back Injuries

May 2011

Many occupations place significant amounts of pressure on the back. Falling into bad habits increases your risk of causing a back injury. The majority of back injuries can be avoided by understanding what causes them and focusing on prevention. There are certain causes of back pain that are still unknown by doctors. Back pain that is due to factors such as family history are unpreventable. Other factors such as weight gain and fitness can be controlled. Then there are work related back injuries. These injuries can be extremely dangerous but are almost always preventable. Four work related factors of back injuries are:

1. Force— exerting too much force on your back can cause injury. You may be susceptible to back injury if you frequently lift or move heavy objects.
2. Repetition— refers to the number of times an individual performs a certain movement. Overly repetitious tasks can lead to muscle fatigue or injury (particularly if they involve stretching the limit of your range of motion or awkward body positioning).
3. Posture— refers to your position when sitting, standing, or performing a task. Sitting still or staying in one position for extended periods of time can lead to pain or injuries. On average, the body can tolerate one position for 20 minutes before the need to adjust.
4. Stress— pressure at work or at home can



increase stress levels. An increase in stress can lead to muscle tension and tightness which may lead to back pain.

Although back injuries are very serious, there are plenty of ways to prevent them. The most important way to prevent a back injury is by keeping a fit physique. Even though your job might require frequent movement, it is still important to engage in physical activity. Physical activity helps keep weight in check which reduces the stress on the back. Doing specific stretching and strengthening exercises for the back, also known as core strengthening exercises, can help build strength in the back to avoid injury and pain. Another important step to take is to pay attention to posture. Poor posture stresses the back. When you slouch/ stand with a swayed back position, you exaggerate the natural curves on your back. This kind of posture can lead to muscle fatigue and injury. If your job requires that you stand for long periods of time, try to occasionally rest one foot on a stool or small box. Hold reading materials at eye level and don't bend forward to write when sitting at a desk. To promote posture while sitting, choose a chair that supports your back. Adjust the chair so that feet stay flat on the floor. Some chairs do not support the lower back curve. In this case, place a rolled towel or small pillow behind the lower back. Remove bulky objects such as wallets as they can disrupt balance in the lower back. Most importantly, remember to lift properly. There is a right and wrong way to lift/ carry objects. If you are not quite sure how to move or lift objects, just remember "BACK":

**B— Bend at the knees**

**A— Avoid twisting**

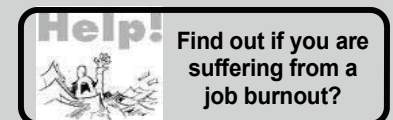
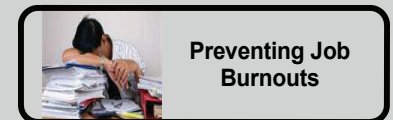
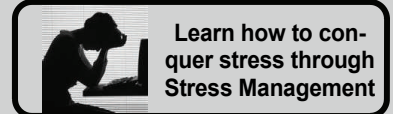
**C— Carry the load close**

**K— Keep abs tight**

Coming Soon >>>

In The Next Issue

Stress



Checkout our Intranet Page!  
[www.mymcallen.net](http://www.mymcallen.net)

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For more information visit:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.lysol.com](http://www.lysol.com)

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

## Provider Contact Information

Health Insurance	Blue Cross Blue Shield	800-521-2227
Dental Insurance	Ameritas	800-487-5553
Vision Insurance	Avesis	800-828-9341
Retirement	TMRS	800-924-8677
Basic Life Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Disability Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Flex Spending Acct	JEM Flex	800-943-9179
Optional Life Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Life Insurance (Firefighters)	Nationwide	800-381-1978
Optional Retirement	ICMA	800-669-7400
Optional Supplemental Policies	Colonial Life	800-325-4368

As always, the City of McAllen Benefits Department is here to help you in your insurance inquiries as well. We can be reached at 956-681-1400 or by email at [benefits@mcallen.net](mailto:benefits@mcallen.net) for your convenience.