Preventing the Spread of Infectious Diseases

Decrease your risk of infecting yourself or others:

- Wash your hands often. This is especially important before and after preparing food, before eating and after using the toilet.

- Get vaccinated. Immunization can drastically reduce your chances of contracting many diseases. Keep your recommended vaccinations up-to-date.

- Use antibiotics sensibly. Take antibiotics only when prescribed. Unless otherwise directed, or unless you are allergic to them, take all prescribed doses of your antibiotic, even if you begin to feel better before you have completed the medication.

- Stay at home if you have signs and symptoms of an infection. Don't go to work or class if you're vomiting, have diarrhea or are running a fever.

- Be smart about food preparation. Keep counters and other kitchen surfaces clean when preparing meals. In addition, promptly refrigerate leftovers. Don't let cooked foods remain at room temperature for an extended period of time.

- Disinfect the 'hot zones' in your residence. These include the kitchen and bathroom — two rooms that can have a high concentration of bacteria and other infectious agents.

- Practice safer sex. Use condoms. Get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STI), and have your partner get tested— or, abstain altogether.

- Don't share personal items. Use your own toothbrush, comb or razor blade. Avoid sharing drinking glasses or dining utensils.

- Travel wisely. Don't fly when you're ill. With so many people confined to such a small area, you may infect other passengers in the plane. And your trip won't be comfortable, either. Depending on where your travels take you, talk to your doctor about any special immunizations you may need.

With a little common sense and the proper precautions, you can avoid infectious diseases and avoid spreading them

Adapted from document on mayoclinic.com by CHWS

1/07 LR, Rev. 7-08/nmg, 06/09/kh