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## **Be Selfish and Stay Healthy**

### **avoiding contagious diseases, colds and other viruses**

Unless you are a recluse who never ventures into the outside world, you are always going to be at risk from contracting some communicable illness. The places where these kinds of infections are prevalent should be obvious. Anywhere that people congregate en masse is a breeding ground for viruses and bacteria; so, when you visit the supermarkets, use public transport; and particularly if you have to sit for ages in the waiting areas of medical centres and hospitals, you are likely to take an unwanted, invisible enemy home with you. For the same reason, an enjoyable night out at the theatre or cinema may end up costing more than just the price of the tickets.

Diseases also love workplaces, schools, colleges and the like. These venues, unfortunately, are populated by many individuals who have to attend regularly, sick or not. It is very doubtful those knowingly suffering from a simple cold will stay away – well, kids might, if they can convince their parents that they are at death's door. As for preventing their ailments from spreading, wearing surgical masks and frequently washing hands or using hand-sanitisers tends to be too inconvenient. Mind you, most will cough or sneeze into something to prevent an atomised spray exploding into the air; which is fine if that something is a handkerchief; but covering their mouth with a hand...? It may be a barrier, albeit inadequate; but after the fact that hand touches surfaces, books, and all manner of things that others will eventually handle. Think about it.

Of course, soldiering on in the face of adversity is commendable: that way the work doesn't fall behind, even if it takes longer because focus and concentration are impaired. The trouble is, once others contract whatever the self-confessed martyr is sharing around, they may not have the fortitude to do much more than go home and stay there until the illness passes. Good on them; bad on the perpetrator who has managed to deplete the workforce, or reduced school attendance considerably.

I mentioned medical waiting rooms. Here is where people go for treatments of all kinds; not necessarily to get a cure for the cold they've picked up. This would be pointless unless there is a secondary infection, because there is not cure for a virus; not yet, anyway. But even if they didn't have one before, there's a good chance that will be put to rights before they leave. They have sat in chairs, perhaps with armrests that they have touched. They have been required to fill in forms on clipboards with pens attached – all handled by someone else before them. They might have fancied a read to while away the time, and there is an assortment of magazines available; publications picked up and flicked through by hoards of disease-carriers.

And what about the children? They can be a nuisance when they are young, and they need to be kept occupied. No problem, not if there's a small area set aside with toys to fiddle with and plastic play modules to climb over, in and on. Needless to say, they aren't exclusive to one child or family; and having a new friend to play with could be fun; especially when sharing isn't an issue. But sharing what? Not just brightly coloured blocks and choo-choo trains. There are probably millions of viruses and bacteria absolutely covering this seemingly harmless equipment; and all provided free for the kids to collect and take away with them.

It is a minefield out there, and we can only try to minimise the risks as best we can:

- ☺ Wash hands before and after going to any public place.
- ☺ Use a hand sanitiser, and carry a small container with you.
- ☺ Be careful what you touch; and try not to transfer any likely diseases into your mouth.
- ☺ Take your own reading material to the medical centres.
- ☺ Really young children need watching constantly to ensure they don't chew or suck the toys; and if there's another kid in the play area coughing and sneezing, keep your own well away.
- ☺ If you are suffering from a communicable disease, stay home; but if you have to go out, take reasonable care to protect others, even to the point of wearing a surgical mask. It may seem funny; but others won't be laughing when they catch what you've got. They certainly won't thank you for it.

So, when it comes to contagious and infectious diseases, be anti-social if you need to be, if you can. You will be doing everyone a favour, including yourself.

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