



SOAP AND WATER & COMMON SENSE

The Definitive Guide to Viruses, Bacteria, Parasites and Disease

by Dr Bonnie Henry

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In the spirit of bestsellers such as *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, *The Coming Plague*, and *The Ghost Map*, Canadian Dr Bonnie Henry offers a lively and fascinating account of the evolution of common sickness and disease. She takes us on a tour through the halls of 'Microbes Inc', a global corporation that has evolved and adapted over billions of years to rule the earth.

From viruses to bacteria to parasites and fungi, Dr. Henry dispels some of the all-too-common myths and misinformation about good bugs and bad bugs, and offers an eye-opening account of the history of disease as well as up-to-date and accurate information on everything from the bugs we breathe to the bugs we eat and drink to the bugs in our backyard and beyond.

"Countless hours of misery are caused by bugs called viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites," she writes, (but) "much of this suffering is preventable."

The book's title is evidence of that fact. Dr Henry is a strong advocate of the major benefits of washing hands well with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to prevent a multitude of diseases.

She cautions, however, against using soap or detergent with antibacterial agents because the antibacterial agents can lead to "antibiotic-resistant bugs, which can then cause hard-to-treat infections." Indeed, this area embodies one of Henry's biggest concerns: "By taking unnecessary medications," she observes, "people have provided the bacteria in their bodies with a golden opportunity to determine the way the antibiotic works, thereby exerting selective pressure on bugs that can resist the drug."



Dr. Bonnie Henry is the Director of Public Health Emergency Management at the BC Centre for Disease Control and Assistant Professor in the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. She was the Senior Consultant to the World Health Organization during the Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2000, a consultant to WHO on the STOP Polio program in Pakistan, the Associate Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto during the SARS outbreak in 2003, and has been working on prevention of the H1N1 influenza (swine flu) outbreak in the province of British Columbia in 2009. She lives in Vancouver, BC.

Top 10 ways to stay healthy:

1. Clean your hands.
2. Cover your mouth when you cough.
3. Stay at home when you have a fever.
4. Get immunized.
5. Don't take antibiotics when you are sick with a virus
6. Cook foods to a safe temperature, especially meat & fish.
7. Wash foods thoroughly, especially food to be eaten raw.
8. Clean cutting boards, counters, doorknobs & toys — any and all surfaces where bugs may linger.
9. Don't use soap or detergents with antibacterial agents.
10. Use condoms.



Dr Bonnie Henry’s “Soap and Water & Common Sense” Top 10 myths and truths about bugs

1. myth: *My immune system is healthy, so I don’t need immunization. Besides, vaccines are dangerous.*

truth: Vaccines work with your immune system to help you fight infection. A report of a potential link between the mmr vaccine and autism has been debunked by scientific evidence. Vaccines are safe and effective, and our best protection against many infections.

2. myth: *I can stop taking antibiotics when I start to feel better.*

truth: Antibiotics take time to work completely against bacterial infections. You need to take the full course you are prescribed to be sure the infection is cured, even if you are feeling better.

3. myth: *Antibiotics will make me better when I have a cold or the flu.*

truth: Antibiotics work only against bacteria. Most coughs, earaches, and sore throats and all colds and flus are caused by viruses. Antibiotics don’t work on viruses and won’t help you recover from these infections.

4. myth: *Over-the-counter cough and cold medications cure infections.*

truth: Medications for fevers — by themselves or in combination with decongestants, antihistamines, and cough suppressants — don’t cure illness. They just help make the symptoms more bearable until your body’s immune system is able to fight off the virus. They may help you feel a bit better, but you could still be infectious to others. Cough and cold medications don’t work and can be dangerous in young children, so they should be avoided.

5. myth: *Superbugs are resistant to handwashing and cleaning.*

truth: Washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand rub will protect you from superbugs just as well as from other bacteria and viruses. Superbugs may be resistant to some antibiotics, making infections difficult to treat, but they are still susceptible to cleaning and are helpless against good hygiene.

6. myth: *I don’t need to worry about having a fever if it’s not too high.*

truth: Even a low-grade fever is often a sign that your body is fighting an infection. If you have a fever with a cough or with vomiting and diarrhea or a rash, these can all be signs that the infection may be one that you can pass on to others. You should stay home and isolate yourself, and call your GP for advice if your symptoms are worrisome.

7. myth: *I need to use dish soap with an antibacterial agent in it to be sure that my dishes are properly cleaned and safe to use.*

truth: Plain soaps and detergents work just fine for washing dishes and clothes, cleaning your house, or washing your hands. Antibacterial agents in soaps and detergents can lead to the development of antibiotic-resistant bugs in the environment, which can then cause hard-to-treat infections.

8. myth: *Organic foods are safer for me and my family.*

truth: “Organic” doesn’t mean free of bugs, and in fact organic fruits and vegetables may have more risk of causing infection if they are not cleaned properly or cooked before you eat them.

9. myth: *Unpasteurized milk is healthier for me.*

truth: Unpasteurized milk has no health benefits over pasteurized milk, and it may put you and your family at risk of infections.

10. myth: *Pets such as cats and dogs are immune to infectious diseases.*

truth: Household pets can carry bacteria and can get sick from many types of bacteria, viruses, and parasites. To keep yourself and your family from getting an illness from your pet, always clean your hands after playing with pets or touching their food, toys, or sleeping areas, and before preparing food.



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