



WELLNESS WORKSHEET 98

Checklist for Avoiding Infection

The best thing you can do to prevent an infection is to limit your exposure to pathogens. The next best thing is to keep your immune system as strong as possible. Read through the following list of statements and check whether each is mostly true or mostly false for you.

True False

Exposure to Pathogens

- ___ ___ I receive drinking water from a clean supply.
- ___ ___ The area in which I live has adequate sewage treatment.
- ___ ___ I frequently wash my hands with soap and warm water for at least 10–20 seconds.
- ___ ___ I avoid close contact with people who are infectious with diseases transmitted via the respiratory route (e.g., influenza, chickenpox, and tuberculosis).
- ___ ___ I do not inject drugs.

When Outdoors

- ___ ___ When hiking or camping, I do not drink water from streams, rivers, or lakes without first purifying it.
- ___ ___ I avoid contact with ticks, mosquitoes, rodents, bats, and other disease carriers.
- ___ ___ When hiking in the woods or playing in a yard in an area where Lyme disease or other tickborne infections have been reported, I take appropriate precautions:
 - ___ Wear light-colored clothing: long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and closed shoes.
 - ___ Tuck my pants into my socks, shoes, or boots.
 - ___ Tuck my shirt into my pants.
 - ___ Wear light-colored, tightly woven fabrics.
 - ___ Wear a hat.
 - ___ Stay near the center of trails.
 - ___ Check myself daily for ticks.
 - ___ Shower and shampoo after each outing.
 - ___ Wash clothes and check equipment after each outing.
 - ___ Use an insect repellent containing DEET, picaridan, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on my skin and/or a spray containing permethrin on my clothing.
- ___ ___ If I discover a tick attached to my skin, I remove it immediately in an appropriate manner (fill in): _____

(over)

True False

In a Sexual Relationship

- ___ ___ I am in a monogamous relationship with a mutually faithful, uninfected partner.
- ___ ___ I use condoms.
- ___ ___ I discuss STDs and prevention with new partners.
- ___ ___ I avoid engaging in high-risk behaviors with any person who might carry HIV.

In the Kitchen

- ___ ___ I wash my hands thoroughly with warm soapy water before and after handling food.
- ___ ___ I don't let groceries sit in a warm car.
- ___ ___ I avoid buying food in containers that leak, bulge, or are severely dented.
- ___ ___ I use separate cutting boards for meat and for foods that will be eaten raw.
- ___ ___ I thoroughly clean all equipment (cutting boards, counters, utensils) before and after use.
- ___ ___ I rinse and scrub fresh fruits and vegetables carefully to remove all dirt.
- ___ ___ I cook all foods thoroughly, especially beef, poultry, fish, pork, and eggs.
- ___ ___ I verify that hamburgers are cooked to 160°F (71°C) with a food thermometer.
- ___ ___ I store foods below 40°F (5°C).
- ___ ___ I do not leave cooked or refrigerated foods at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- ___ ___ I thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave.
- ___ ___ I use only pasteurized milk and juice.
- ___ ___ I avoid coughing or sneezing over foods, even when I'm healthy.
- ___ ___ I cover any cuts on my hands when handling food.

To Keep Your Immune System Healthy

- ___ ___ I eat a balanced diet, following the guidelines presented in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- ___ ___ I maintain a healthy weight.
- ___ ___ I get enough sleep, 6–8 hours per night.
- ___ ___ I exercise regularly.
- ___ ___ I don't smoke, and I drink alcohol only in moderation.
- ___ ___ I wash my hands frequently.
- ___ ___ I have effective ways of coping with stress.
- ___ ___ I get all recommended immunizations and booster shots.
- ___ ___ *For people with heart valve disorders that place them at increased risk of infection:* I check with my health care provider about antibiotic use before dental or surgical procedures and before body piercing.

False answers indicate areas where you could change your behavior to help avoid infectious diseases. Consider creating a behavior change strategy for any statement you checked as false.