

# BACK TO SCHOOL

Back to school season brings with it many infectious disease risks. Schools can act as a hub for the transmission of infection because children come into regular close contact, so germs can spread between them very easily.<sup>1</sup> Infections such as colds and flu and gastrointestinal infections such as diarrhoea and vomiting can cause bouts of illness throughout the year — keeping children away from school affecting their education and potentially impacting on the household economy if parents have to take unpaid time off work to care for sick children.

## KEY FACTS

**78% OF CHILDREN ARE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL IN THE USA FOR ONE DAY OR MORE AS A RESULT OF THE FLU<sup>2</sup>**

**22 MILLION SCHOOL DAYS ARE LOST PER YEAR DUE TO CASES OF THE COMMON COLD AMONG CHILDREN<sup>3</sup>**

**68% OF MOTHERS CLAIM THEIR CHILDREN ARE NOT MADE TO WASH THEIR HANDS AFTER GOING TO THE TOILET AT SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>**

## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON BACK TO SCHOOL ILLNESSES?

### INFLUENZA

In the northern hemisphere, influenza peaks often coincide with the start of the school term. Because children come into close contact with each other and they have little hygiene awareness, infections such as seasonal flu can spread very easily between them. Children suffering from the flu should be kept off school for at least twenty-four hours after their high temperature (38°C and above) has subsided.

### COMMON COLD

The common cold is a leading cause of doctor's visits and children missing school. Colds are the most common infection to arise in children when they go back to school. In the US, children are likely to suffer from three to eight colds a year; resulting in 22 million lost school days in the USA.<sup>3</sup>

### FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

On average there are 25 outbreaks of foodborne diseases in school per year.<sup>4</sup> A school swabbing study carried out by The Global Hygiene Council found that 44% of eating areas in schools tested were contaminated with bacteria which, if ingested, could cause food poisoning.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW CAN I PREVENT THE SPREAD?



Children should stay at home when sick (supervised by an adult) and return to school **24 hours** after their symptoms have subsided to prevent the spread of infection to other school children.



Children can touch surfaces up to **300 times in 30 minutes**,<sup>5</sup> therefore disinfection of frequently touched surfaces at home and at school is especially important.



Encourage your children to **cover their nose and mouth with a tissue** when sneezing, coughing or blowing their nose and then throw the tissue in a bin. Remind them to wash their hands afterwards.



Teach your children to regularly **wash their hands** with soap and clean running water for at least **20 seconds**.