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## Coming to Terms with Germs

Bathrooms have the deserved reputation for harbouring germs, but hospital elevators are giving them a run for their money! In fact, a recent survey in Toronto, seeking to identify sources of hospital infections, found higher concentrations of microbes on elevator buttons than most washrooms. Other sources? Lab coats, keyboards, cell phones, stethoscopes, scotch tape, ultrasound transducers, and X-ray equipment. Pass the hand sanitizer, please!

### Enter Enteroviruses

Enteroviruses are uncommon causes of the “common cold,” but most people who get them experience relatively mild symptoms. The recent spate of children contracting Enterovirus-D68 is alarming in that these kids have experienced paralysis, and even death. Researchers are doing their best to understand this phenomenon and develop treatments and/or a vaccine. In the meantime, handwashing, disinfecting and avoiding sick people are your only options.

### Do Anti-Virals Work?

With the H1N1 pandemic a few years ago, the attention of health authorities turned to anti-viral drugs, such as Tamiflu or Relenza. These medications were stockpiled for anticipated outbreaks and often provided, free-of-charge, to afflicted patients. A recent Cochrane review is casting doubt on the effectiveness of these medications and their role in public health policy. The suggestion is that money might be better spent on other means of reducing transmission.

### Only Use Antibiotics When You Need To

When one is in the grip of a cold or flu bug – or one’s child is – one will take just about anything to feel better. Colds and flus are caused by viruses – while antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections. That said, it comes as somewhat of a surprise that antibiotics are still being prescribed at twice the expected rate for those under 18 years old. This poses a risk for the individuals taking unnecessary drugs, as well as the community – with the risk of resistant bacteria.

### Hand Washing Works!

Your best bet for reducing your risk of contracting infections is frequent hand washing and avoiding touching your face. Support this with vaccines, as well as staying hydrated, eating healthy food, exercising and getting plenty of sleep.