

Gloved Hands May Spread Germs

People are wearing gloves (made from materials like vinyl, latex or nitril) when they head out in public during the pandemic. While individuals think they are being safe and protecting themselves and others from the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, they may actually be spreading germs in the community. Vinyl, latex and nitril gloves protect the skin from body fluids and certain harmful chemicals. The surface of gloves can support germs just like skin. But, unlike skin, washing gloves is not an option. Even healthcare workers are instructed to wash their hands before they put on gloves and after taking off gloves. **Gloves are not a substitute for hand washing.**



How Gloves Can Spread Germs

When gloves are put on they are presumably clean.

- Germs collect on the gloves when a person wearing them starts touching surfaces (elevator buttons, grocery carts, gas station pumps).
- Germs are spread when the person touches other objects.

People may think they are protected by the gloves, but they are not.

- Difference: you can clean your bare hands with hand sanitizers or soap and water. This stops the spread of the germs.



Gloves Are Not a Complete Barrier

Gloves may have very tiny (micro-sized) pin holes not visible to the naked eye.

- Thousands of germs pass through these holes onto the skin in a short amount of time.
- The germs may be on the outside of the glove and may seep inside too.
- Gloves can be damaged with holes made by fingernails, jewelry or wear and tear.
- Vinyl, latex and nitril gloves can be damaged by moisture, heat and chemicals.



Don't Touch Your Face

This is a habit that is hard to break.

- Keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth because it is one way germs enter the body and cause infections.
- When people wear gloves, it may give them a false sense of security. Since the outside of gloves are not clean; gloves may be more contaminated than bare hands.
- Be sure to wash your hands frequently with hand sanitizer or soap and water often and keep hands away from the face.