HOW DO VIRUSES SPREAD FROM SURFACES TO PEOPLE?

We get sick when viruses enter our EYES, NOSE, and MOUTH.

When you touch something with a live virus on it and then touch your face, without cleaning your hands first, the virus can get into your eyes, nose, and mouth.

To understand how, let’s look at how respiratory droplets travel.

When someone exhales, some of the tiny droplets in their breath get caught in the air. Then they get carried away, traveling wherever the air currents go. A lot of those droplets are big and don’t travel far in the air.

Instead, they fall towards the ground, like a leaf.

But some of the leaves will get caught by the wind and travel wherever it blows. These leaves will fall a little further away from the tree.

These leaves fall on the ground, the roof of your house, and your car.

Once the droplets land and set down, if the virus can survive long enough to get on your hands, viruses could be on a break room door handle, computer keyboard at the nurse’s station, chair, IV pull, or more.

Viruses can also get onto surfaces when you inhale. One surface after another, and more and more.

So, we can see why good hand hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection are important.

These actions make sure we can reduce the spread of viruses and other germs that can make us sick.

We encourage you to apply this knowledge to other diseases—not just COVID-19—to protect yourself and others from sickness.

For more information on topics like this, visit cdc.gov/projectfrstline.

See all of NNPHI’s Project Firstline interactive learning experiences.

OR ON OUR HANDS

When a person with a live virus coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks, the virus can get caught in the air. Then it can get carried away, traveling wherever the air currents go. A lot of those droplets are big and don’t travel far in the air.

Instead, they fall towards the ground, like a leaf.