

# Q&A for Kit-Related Health Issues

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## **Q. What do girls do to keep their kits clean?**

A. Every Days for Girls kit includes a washcloth and soap. Plain soap and water have been found to be highly effective at removing harmful bacteria.<sup>1</sup>

## **Q. Wouldn't it be more effective to use a stronger soap with an antimicrobial?**

A. Nope. Antimicrobials have not been proven to significantly reduce the risk for contacting various diseases. In 2000, the American Medical Association stated that not only was there limited data concerning the efficacy of antimicrobials, but there was mounting evidence that these agents resulted in dangerous strains of resistant bacteria.<sup>2</sup>

## **Q. Antimicrobials kill bacteria, but not viruses. If girls were to share a DfG kit, is there a risk of transmission for HIV or Hepatitis?**

A. Girls who receive kits also receive health education in the importance of not only keeping their kits clean, but also why kits should never be shared. That being said, there is always the potential for women to share, especially if they experience their cycles at different times of the month. DfG has not received any reports of this happening, but it is not to say that sharing kits exists outside the realm of possibility.

Even if girls were to share kits, the risk of disease transmission would be low. The risk of transmission for Hepatitis B through a positive needlestick is between 6-30%, depending on the antigen level of the source individual. The risk of Hepatitis C transmission from a positive needlestick is 1.8%, and it is 0.3% for HIV.<sup>3</sup> These are all risk factors for a needlestick, but not skin to bodily fluid contact, which is what would be the case were girls to share the same shields and liners. The skin is an incredibly effective barrier to bacteria and viruses. A virus could possibly be transmitted if a girl had a cut or a rash in her genital area, but the risk of this is low, and further mitigated when using the proper care techniques taught by Days for Girls.

## **Q. How long can HIV and Hepatitis survive outside the body?**

Hepatitis can last longer than HIV. Drying HIV-infected blood reduces the prevalence of HIV by 90-99% within a few hours. In a dried state, Hepatitis B may last up to one week, possibly longer. Neither HIV nor Hepatitis can reproduce outside the body.<sup>4</sup> This is one reason why completely drying pads and liners after washing is so important. Days for Girls supports drying pads and liners outside in the sun, or ironing them. UV rays will kill many microbes by damaging their cellular structure. This is the same reason too much exposure to sunlight can cause skin or eye damage in humans.<sup>5</sup>

Ironing is recommended either when girls wish to be more discreet, or in areas with potential bot fly infestation; if wet clothing is hung outside, there is a risk that bot flies will lay larvae in the cloth. The PUL moisture-barrier fabric can withstand low iron settings.

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<sup>1</sup>Allison E. Aiello, Elaine L. Larson, and Stuart B. Levy. "Consumer Antibacterial Soaps: Effective or Just Risky?" *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. 45:2. 137-147.

[http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/45/Supplement\\_2/S137.long](http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/45/Supplement_2/S137.long)

<sup>2</sup>Council on Scientific Affairs. *2000 Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association*. 2000. 4. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/443/csa-00.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>CDC. *Exposure to Blood: What Healthcare Personnel Need to Know*. 2003. 2-3. [http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/bbp/Exp\\_to\\_Blood.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/bbp/Exp_to_Blood.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>CDC. *Survival of HIV in the Environment*. July 29, 1999. <http://www.thebody.com/content/art17220.html?ic=2004>

<sup>5</sup>Pennsylvania State University, Department of Architectural Engineering. *Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation*. 2000. <http://www.engr.psu.edu/iec/abe/control/ultraviolet.asp>