Did you know that the rhinovirus, which causes the common cold, can live on dry surfaces from 2 hours to 7 days? The virus that causes influenza can live on surfaces 1-2 days. The norovirus which causes gastroenteritis (think nausea, vomiting and diarrhea) can live up to 3 days on telephone buttons! *

How are infectious diseases transmitted? Here is an example.
- Someone in your class has a “cold” (pathogen with reservoir)
- He or she sneezes (portal of exit)
- Droplets from a sneeze can travel up to 3 feet (transmission).
- Everyone within that 3 foot radius can potentially pick up a droplet by breathing it in, or other direct contact (portal of entry).
- The virus is then transmitted to them.

Some of the people may get sick (susceptible host) and continue the above cycle. Others have resistance to that virus, or an immune system that is able to fight it off.

Prevention is important.
- The best way to prevent the spread of infection is frequent hand washing!
  Use of hand sanitizers is good when soap and water are not available.
- Avoid sharing personal items: drinks, chap sticks, utensils, food, toothbrushes, towels, etc.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough with a tissue, or cough/sneeze into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you are really ill, stay home for 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- Consider vaccination if available for specific diseases.

To help keep your immune system in top condition:
- Get adequate sleep
- Eat a well balanced diet
- Manage your stress in a healthy way
- Get regular exercise
- Don’t smoke

Web sites with infection prevention information include: cdc.gov, world health organization, Maine CDC.