

## Handing Out Germs

1. Mark three 3" X 5" cards in some way that is not conspicuous and then pass out three 3" X 5" cards to each student. Make sure the three "marked" cards are handed out to different students. Have each student write his or her name on each card.
2. Play music while the students walk around the room. Stop the music and each student should trade a card with another student, and then state one thing about him or herself (such as their favorite color, food or book). Repeat two more times. This simulates germ transmission that occurs when people interact.
3. Tell the students to check their cards to see if it is marked. Tell them to stand up. Tell the class that they should pretend that each of the people with a marked card is getting sick.
4. Have students check their cards to see if they exchanged cards with the "sick" students. If they did, they should stand up too. Have these students read the names of the students they exchanged cards with and have those students stand up too. Continue until all the students who had direct or indirect contact with the sick students are standing.
5. Have the class look around to see the number of people who have been "handed" an illness. Discuss what this means.

### Follow up questions:

- You saw how many students were "infected" by the three students. How many students would have gotten "infected" if the three people who were getting sick had stayed home instead of coming to school?
- How could we reduce the spread of disease if such germs can be dispersed so readily?
- What do our bodies do to handle germs since we don't live in a germ-free world? [Answer: *Make antibodies, make white blood cells, build up immune system.*] How can good hand hygiene help?

### Extensions

1. **Math extension:** Have the students make a chart with the following data: a) the number of people in the class, b) the number of people who were "sick" before the first "germ" exchange [three], and c) the number of people who got "sick" after the exchanges.

2. **Social Studies extension:** research some of the great plagues in history and how lack of knowledge contributed to the spread of these diseases. Where did they occur? Is the recent outbreak of SARS something we should be concerned with? What diseases used to regularly kill people but now we have vaccines for them? What are the new killers?
3. Talk about sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS. How is the spread of AIDS the same as "sick germ"? How is it different?
4. Discuss how impressions or assumptions about others can sometimes be incorrect and can lead to problems. Write about an incident when assumptions led to difficulties and how you would propose a better way to handle the situation.