



Proper Hand Washing

Stop the Spread of Germs that Make You and Others Sick

Many illnesses are spread through touch. The single most important defense against spreading infection is proper hand washing.

Hand washing is often taken for granted because it can be routine. Even if you think you have done a good job washing your hands, they are probably not as clean as they should be. Good hand washing stops contaminants from moving from your hands to other parts of your body or to surfaces you touch.

4 Easy Steps to Better Handwashing

The elements of proper hand washing are easier than you think. To clean your hands thoroughly, remember the following:

- 1. Use soap.**
- 2. Use water.** Any water will do, but the hotter the better.
- 3. Apply friction.** Friction helps to remove dirt and microorganisms. Rub your hands together, taking care to scrub between fingers, under rings, under fingernails, and up the wrists and lower arms. If possible, remove jewelry prior to washing your hands, as germs can lurk under rings and watches.
- 4. Do not skimp on time.** You should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. This seems like a short amount of time until you consider the rinse-and-wipe-dry method we have all probably been guilty of using at one time or another. To ensure you are spending enough time scrubbing, sing “Happy Birthday” twice (in your head or out loud, your choice).

When to Wash Your Hands

- After coughing or sneezing. Remember to cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If no tissue is available, “cover with your corner”—sneeze into your upper sleeve, NOT your hands.
- After using the toilet, changing a diaper, or assisting someone else with using the bathroom.
- Before and after preparing food or eating a meal or snack.
- Before and after you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- When you arrive at work.
- Before you leave work.
- Prior to emptying the dishwasher, setting the table, or any other cleaning.
- After contact with someone who has been ill.
- After contact with blood or body fluids.
- After removing protective gloves. Remember, washing hands and wearing gloves are not substitutions for each other - they are meant to complement each other.
- After smoking.
- After handling pets or pet waste.
- Whenever they are soiled.

HAND SANITIZER

Proper hand washing with soap and water is best, but in instances where soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizing gels or wipes are an option. Wipes and gels do not require water to disinfect, which make them more convenient, especially if you are on the go.

Remember, keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses.

www.cdc.gov - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is dedicated to protecting health and promoting quality of life through the prevention and control of disease, injury, and disability.

www.hhs.gov - The Department of Health and Human Services is the government’s principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services

www.hcpro.com - OSHA Healthcare Advisor is a free resource that provides current safety and OSHA compliance information, including expert advice and tips and tools for employee training.