

Hand Hygiene Fact Sheet

HS02-045D (10-21)

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and others from getting sick. Learn when and how to wash your hands to stay healthy.

How Germs Spread

Washing hands can keep you healthy and help prevent the spread of infections from one person to another. Germs can spread to you from other people or from surfaces you touch. These tips can help stop the spread of germs:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Never prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands.
- Do not touch a contaminated surface or objects.
- Do not blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into your hands and then touch other peoples' hands or common objects.

Key Times to Wash Hands

You can help yourself and others stay healthy by washing your hands often. There are many key times to wash your hands to keep germs from spreading. Among them are:

- before, during, and after preparing food;
- before and after eating food;
- before and after caring for someone who is vomiting or has diarrhea;
- before and after treating a cut or wound;



- after using the toilet;
- after changing diapers or cleaning a child who has used the toilet;
- after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
- after touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste;
- after handling pet food or pet treats; and
- after touching garbage or garbage containers.

How to Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands is easy, and it is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop many germs from spreading from person to person and through the community.

Five Steps to Handwashing



Soap and Water

Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.



Lather Up

Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap (no water). Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



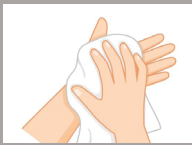
Scrub

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.



Rinse

Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.



Dry

Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dryer.

Use Hand Sanitizer When You Cannot Use Soap and Water

Washing hands with soap and water is the most effective way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains **at least 60% alcohol**. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However, hand sanitizers:

- do not get rid of all types of germs;
- may not be as effective when hands

are visibly dirty or greasy; and

- might not remove harmful chemicals like pesticides and heavy metals.

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

Use these three steps when you apply hand sanitizer:

- Place the gel in the palm of one hand using the recommended amount on the label;
- Rub your hands together.
- Spread the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and between your fingers until your hands are dry. This should take about **20 seconds**.

This publication was produced in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information on how to protect yourself and others from the spread of germs, visit the [CDC handwashing website](#).



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