
Hand Washing

What You Need to Know



The most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of illness is to wash your hands and your children's hands thoroughly and often.

This is how you should wash your hands:

- Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds using warm running water and soap. Make sure you have lots of bubbles.
- Wash under fingernails, between fingers, back of hands and wrists.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry hands completely. In the home, change hand washing towels often.

In public bathrooms:

- Dry your hands with a single-use paper towel (or hot air blow dryer).
- If your towel dispenser has a handle, be sure to roll the paper down before you wash your hands. This helps to ensure that you will not pick up new germs from the handle.
- For hand-held faucets, turn off water using a paper towel instead of bare hands so you will not pick up new germs on your clean hands.
- Open the bathroom door with the same paper towel.

These are times when you should wash your hands:

- After you use the bathroom or help a child use the bathroom.
- After you change a diaper.
- After you handle items soiled with body fluids or wastes such as blood, drool, urine, stool or discharge from nose or eyes.
- After you clean up messes.
- After you handle a sick child.
- Before you prepare or serve food.
- Before you eat or drink.
- After touching an animal or pet.

Teach and show children how to wash hands correctly. They should wash hands after:

- Arriving home from day care, a friend's home, an outing, or school.
- Using the toilet or having their diapers changed.
- Touching a child who may be sick or handling soiled items.
- Eating or drinking.
- Touching an animal or pet.

Always practice healthy habits:

- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, or turn away when coughing.
- Immediately throw away used tissues, followed by careful hand washing.
- Avoid sharing objects if they have been in the mouth (pacifiers, toys, silverware, etc.); wash objects in hot, soapy water between use.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing, sneezing or touching common surfaces like door knobs, keyboards and telephones. You can also use alcohol-based hand cleaners.



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