

## Handwashing

Germs are everywhere. They can get on your hands and items you touch throughout the day. Handwashing can be one of the best ways to protect you and others from getting sick and spreading germs to those around you.

Germs can spread with unwashed hands when touching your face, specifically your mouth, nose and eyes. The spreading of germs can make you sick. We often touch our face without realizing it. Handwashing with soap is recommended to help prevent illness. Studies have shown that handwashing can significantly reduce the risk of infections, such as a cold or the flu.

The following are key times when you should wash your hands:

- During food preparation
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after tending to a wound
- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
- After tending to or petting an animal
- After touching garbage

There are five steps to effective handwashing:

1. Wet hands with clean water
2. Lather hands with soap by rubbing hands together
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse hands with clean water
5. Dry hands with a clean towel or air dry them

If you don't have access to soap and clean water, a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be a good alternative. However, soap and water is the best method to washing hands. Hand sanitizer doesn't get rid of all types of germs, therefore it may not be effective on soiled hands and may not remove harmful chemicals.

There are three steps to effectively using hand sanitizer:

1. Apply the product to the palm of one hand
2. Rub hands together
3. Rub the hand sanitizer together all over hands for 20 seconds (until dry)

Handwashing should be a part of proper hygiene in your everyday life. It is especially important during the Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic.

CDC.gov

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