

Proper Hand Washing

It's in your hands



Keeping your hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing your hands with soap and clean water.

The Facts:

Hand washing is like the “do-it-yourself” vaccine. Proper hand washing is not only hygienic, but it is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections in all settings - from the workplace and home to childcare facilities and hospitals, and will help you stay healthy. You carry millions of microbes on your hands. While most of them are harmless, you do attract some that can cause illnesses, such as colds, flu, and diarrhea. Germs can be spread by simple person to person contact or by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching your face.

You come in contact with an average of 300 surfaces every 30 minutes, exposing yourself to 840,000 germs. As you touch people, surfaces and objects throughout the day, you accumulate germs on your hands. Just think of everyone before you that has touched that same surface. A recent survey shows that 71% of people say they practice good hand hygiene and wash their hands frequently, yet 58% have witnessed others leaving a public washroom without washing their hands.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. A hand sanitizer is great option for when you can't get to soap and water, and it's actually more effective at eliminating germs. It kills them rather than just removing them. However, experts say washing with soap and water should always be your first choice, especially if you have visible dirt on your hands, as sanitizer can't cut through that grime.

Proper Hand Washing:

Hand washing can greatly reduce the chance of spreading or getting germs. The mechanical action of scrubbing loosens up the dirt and microbes on our hands and the soap picks them up and binds to them so that the water can wash them away. The use of gloves is not a substitute for hand washing.

How to:

- **Remove** any rings or other jewelry.
- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the back of your hands, between your fingers, forearms and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" or "A, B, C" song twice from beginning to end .
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

