



HAND WASHING

How do I properly wash my hands?

For effective hand washing, follow these steps:

- Remove any rings or other jewelry.
- Use water and wet your hands thoroughly.
- Use soap (1-3 mL) and lather very well.
- Lather with soap for at least 20 seconds – make sure you wash between your fingers, under your finger nails, front and backs of your hands, wrists, and forearms.
- Rinse thoroughly under clean, running water. Use a rubbing motion.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel or clean towel or use an air dryer.
- Turn off the taps/faucets with a paper towel (so you do not re-contaminate your hands).
- Protect your hands from touching dirty surfaces as you leave the bathroom. For example, use the same paper towel to open the door.

Other tips include:

- Cover cuts with bandages and wear gloves for added protection (cuts are very vulnerable to infections).
- Artificial nails and chipped nail polish have been associated with an increase in the number of bacteria on the fingernails. Be sure to clean the nails properly.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth.

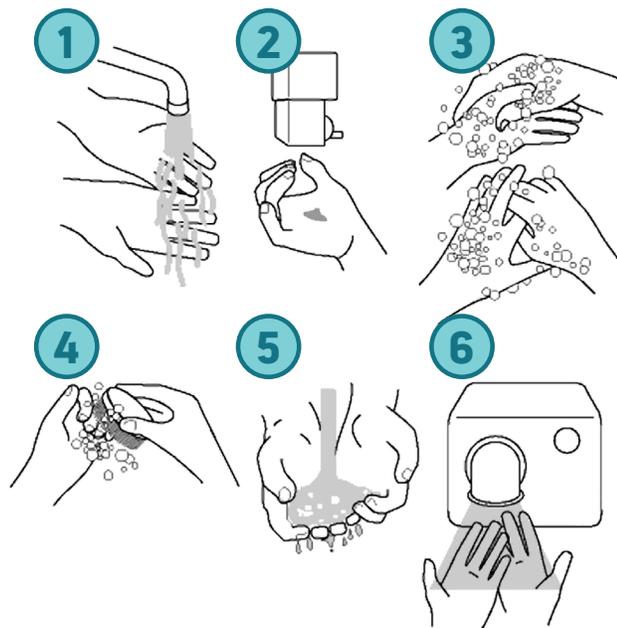
Assume that contact with any human body fluids is infectious.

Liquid soap in disposable containers is best. If using reusable containers, they should be washed and dried before refilling. If using a bar of soap, be sure to set it on a rack that allows water to drain or use small bars that can be changed frequently.

If dry skin occurs, use a moisturizing lotion.

WASHING YOUR HANDS

- 1 Wet hands
- 2 Use soap
- 3 Lather
- 4 Scrub for 20 seconds
- 5 Rinse
- 6 Dry





HAND WASHING

When should I wash my hands?

Different situations where people can pick up “germs” include:

- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After using the washroom (includes changing diapers).
- After blowing your nose or after sneezing in your hands.
- Before and after eating, handling food, drinking or smoking.
- After touching raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- After handling garbage or contact with contaminated surfaces such as garbage bins, cleaning cloths.
- Visiting or caring for sick people.
- After wiping another person’s nose, or handling soiled tissues.
- Before preparing or taking medications.
- After contact with blood or body fluids such as vomit or saliva.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- Before inserting and removing contact lenses.
- Handling pets, animals or animal waste.
- After handling pet food or pet treats.

Making sure that employees wash their hands properly after using the washroom is very important in reducing disease transmission gastrointestinal infections.

Using soap and lathering up is very important (rinsing hands in water only is not as effective). Use warm running water where possible for comfort, but water temperature is not important to effective cleaning. Hands should be washed for a minimum of 20 seconds all together (rinsing and lathering) – longer if the hands are visibly soiled. To help people (especially children) wash long enough, one option may be to sing a short song such as “Happy Birthday” or “A, B, C” - you might need to sing it twice if you sing fast. The idea of surgeons scrubbing for an operation (as on TV) is very similar.

What about antibacterial soaps or hand sanitizers?

While it is true that regular soap and water does not actually kill microorganisms (they create a slippery surface that allows the organisms to “slide off”), antibacterial soaps are typically considered to be unnecessary for most purposes. The exception may be in a hospital where special situations are present (e.g., before invasive procedures, when caring for severely immuno-compromised patients, critical care areas, intensive care nurseries, etc.). Antibacterial agents should be chosen carefully based on their active ingredients and characteristics, and when persistent antibacterial or antimicrobial activity on the hands is desired.

When there is no soap or water available, one alternative is to use hand sanitizers or waterless hand scrubs. Some of these products are made of ethyl alcohol mixed with emollients (skin softeners) and other agents. They are often available as a gel, or on wipes or towelettes. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol. Sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs, and might not remove some chemicals. Hand sanitizers may have odours which may be irritating to some users.

- Apply suggested amount to the palm of one hand based on the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Rub hands together.
- Spread and rub the product over your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.
- Use enough product to cover all of your hands and fingers.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are the preferred method for healthcare providers when the hands are not visibly soiled. The sanitizers can also be used by paramedics, home care attendants, or other mobile workers where hand washing facilities are not available. However, these agents are not effective when the hands are heavily contaminated with dirt, blood, or other organic materials. Hand washing with soap and water is recommended when hands are visibly soiled.