

eHouseCall

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

Handwashing: The Best Way to Prevent Infection

We all know the correct way to wash our hands, right? Wrong! Many people don't follow all of the recommended steps to fully rid their hands of germs. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), you should follow these steps when washing your hands:



1. Wet your hands with clean, warm or cold running water.
2. Turn off the running water and apply soap.
3. Lather the palm of your hands, back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails by rubbing them together with soap.
4. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
If you need help timing how long you scrub, try humming the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
5. Rinse your hands well under clean running water.
6. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

What if you don't have soap or clean running water?

Remember, following the steps above to wash your hands with soap and water is the best way to remove germs in most situations. However, if soap and water are not available, according to the CDC you can use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Follow these steps when using hand sanitizers:

1. Check label for information about the amount of product you should use and apply it to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

While these sorts of hand sanitizers can help reduce the number of germs on hands, washing with soap and water should always be your first choice.

DidUKnow?

WHY WASH YOUR HANDS?

Germs get into our body through our eyes, nose and mouth and can make us sick. Germs from someone's unwashed hands can also get into food and drinks, can be transferred to other objects and then transferred to another person's hands, making them sick. Hand washing is the single most important way to prevent this constant spreading of germs and infections. Unwashed or poorly washed hands can spread conditions such as:

- Colds
- Infectious diarrhea
- Respiratory infections
- Flu
- Ear infections
- Strep throat
- Skin and eye infections

Many germs and viruses live on the surface of desks, pens and pencils, toilets, toys, telephones, stair rails, door knobs and food, so it's important to keep surfaces clean and wash your hands often.

Information Sources

CDC.gov, *When and How to Wash Your Hands* (July 2018): www.cdc.gov

CDC.gov, *Why Wash Your Hands* (July 2018): www.cdc.gov

Doctor's Bag



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Hand washing is a standard in the medical and food service world, but it's just as important in the home or office setting. Many diseases are spread by not washing hands with soap and water. Keeping your hands clean is the single most effective thing you can do to avoid getting sick and prevent spreading germs to others. You should wash your hands:

- Whenever they get dirty
- Before, during and after handling or preparing food
- Before and after you eat
- After using the bathroom or changing diapers
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Before and after touching or treating a cut, sore or wound
- After handling pets, taking out the garbage or doing housework
- Often, if you're around someone who is sick

Washing your hands is simple, easy and effective. And it is an easy habit to develop. Make sure you wash your hands often with soap and water and encourage your children to do the same. Doing so can help ensure the health of you and your family.