

Hand Washing

Hand washing is a simple habit, something most people do without thinking. Yet hand washing, when done properly, is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick. This simple habit requires only soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer — a cleanser that doesn't require water.

The dangers of not washing your hands

Despite the proven health benefits of hand washing, many people don't practice this habit as often as they should — even after using the toilet. Throughout the day you accumulate germs on your hands from a variety of sources, such as direct contact with people, contaminated surfaces, foods, even animals and animal waste. If you don't wash your hands frequently enough, you can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. And you can spread these germs to others by touching them or by touching surfaces that they also touch, such as doorknobs.

Infectious diseases that are commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact include the common cold, flu and several gastrointestinal disorders, such as infectious diarrhea. While most people will get over a cold, the flu can be much more serious. Some people with the flu, particularly older adults and people with chronic medical problems, can develop pneumonia. The combination of the flu and pneumonia, in fact, is the eighth-leading cause of death among Americans.

Inadequate hand hygiene also contributes to food-related illnesses, such as salmonella and E. coli infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 76 million Americans get a food-borne illness each year. Of these, about 5,000 die as a result of their illness. Others experience the annoying signs and symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Proper hand-washing techniques

Good hand-washing techniques include washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Antimicrobial wipes or towelettes are just as effective as soap and water in cleaning your hands but aren't as good as alcohol-based sanitizers.

Antibacterial soaps have become increasingly popular in recent years. However, these soaps are no more effective at killing germs than is regular soap. Using antibacterial soaps may lead to the development of bacteria that are resistant to the products' antimicrobial agents — making it even harder to kill these germs in the future. In general, regular soap is fine. The combination of scrubbing your hands with soap — antibacterial or not — and rinsing them with water loosens and removes bacteria from your hands.

Proper hand washing with soap and water

Follow these instructions for washing with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap or use clean bar soap. Lather well.
- Rub your hands vigorously together for at least 15 to 20 seconds.
- Scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

Proper use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers — which don't require water — are an alternative to hand washing, particularly when soap and water aren't available. Not all hand sanitizers are created equal, though. Some "waterless" hand sanitizers don't contain alcohol. Use only the alcohol-based products. The CDC recommends choosing products that contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

To use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply about 1/2 teaspoon of the product to the palm of your hand.
- Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry.

If your hands are visibly dirty, however, wash with soap and water, if available, rather than a sanitizer.

When should you wash your hands?

Although it's impossible to keep your bare hands germ-free, there are times when it's critical to wash your hands to limit the transfer of bacteria, viruses and other microbes.

Always wash hands:

- After using the toilet
- Before and after eating
- After changing a diaper — wash the diaper-wearer's hands, too
- After touching animals or animal waste
- Before and after preparing food, especially before and immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish
- After blowing your nose
- After coughing or sneezing into your hands
- Before and after treating wounds or cuts
- Before and after touching a sick or injured person
- After handling garbage
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses

What are some ways to help children with good hand washing technique?

It is important to encourage and help children to wash hands before eating, after playing outdoors or playing with pets, after using the bathroom and after blowing their noses.

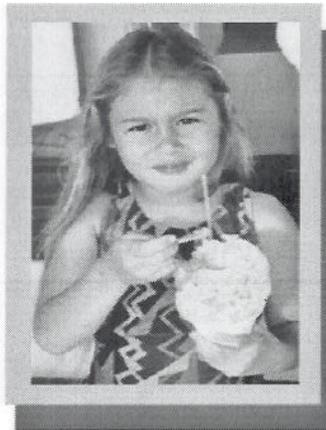
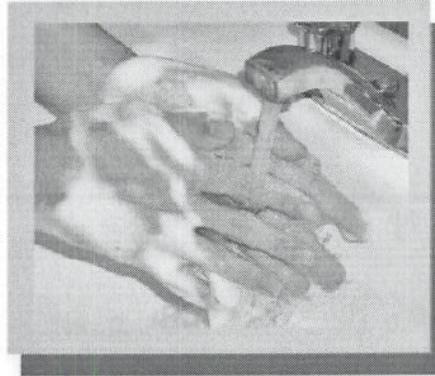
Even though hands may appear to be clean, they may carry germs or microorganisms that are capable of causing disease. Don't assume that children know how to wash their hands properly. Supervision, especially in a day care setting, is an essential element in forming good hand washing habits in children.

Children learn by example! Let them observe good hand washing technique from the adults who care for them.

Directions for Washing Hands

HOW

-  Wet hands with running water
-  Place soap into palms
-  Rub together to make a lather
-  Scrub hands vigorously for 20 seconds
-  Rinse soap off hands
-  Dry hands with disposable paper towels, not on clothing



WHEN

- After going to the toilet 
- Upon exiting animal areas 
- Before eating 
- Before preparing foods 
- After removing soiled clothes or shoes 

Sample Hand Washing School Policy

Studies have shown that hand washing and personal hygiene are the most important measures a person can use to prevent illness and communicable disease. Many germs can live for long periods on tables, counters and other hard surfaces. Hand washing with soap and warm water for a minimum of twenty (20) seconds, paying close attention to the surfaces between the fingers and on the back of the hands, is best for removing dirt and germs. The proper use of hand sanitizers is also useful in controlling the spread of germs.

It is the policy of {name of school} that students and staff will wash their hands with soap & water;

1. After using the rest room
2. Before and after eating
3. If their hands are visibly soiled
4. If the student or staff member has encountered chemicals or other items, such as soil, in a science lab, art room, vocational facility or other educational venue that soils hands
5. If the student or staff member encountered chemicals during cleaning the school environment
6. After cleaning animal habitats or handling animals
7. Before and after each task when preparing food in any class such as family science or an integrated class
8. After athletic practices and games
9. If the student or staff member has encountered bodily fluids (e.g. blood, nasal discharge, mucous from coughing, etc.)
10. After recess
11. After sneezing or coughing

When soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly soiled, CDC guidance adds that alcohol-based, waterless disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used in place of hand washing on most occasions. Not all sanitizers are effective, however. A 60 percent minimum alcohol concentration is necessary to kill most harmful bacteria and viruses.

Hand washing signs will be posted at all rest rooms and/or hand sinks.

Soap, warm water and towels or an air dryer will be located at all hand washing areas.

The school will provide education in hand washing and hand hygiene at least once every school year.

Plans for monitoring the hand hygiene protocol are:

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Superintendent/Principal

Effective Date

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov

Hand Hygiene Resource Center, St. Raphael Healthcare System, New Haven, CT.,
www.handhygiene.org

Ohio Dept. of Health, Pandemic Influenza Toolkit for Schools, <http://www.ohiopandemicflu.gov/>

School Network for Absenteeism Prevention, It's a SNAP <http://www.itsasnap.org/index.asp>