

Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs and infection.



Clean Hands

Germs can be spread from hands to high-touch items such as doorknobs, grocery carts, handrails, phones and computer keyboards. When you handle these items, then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, germs can spread. This is just one way that germs spread.

Keeping your hands clean helps you:

- ▶ Avoid getting sick.
- ▶ Avoid spreading germs to others.
- ▶ Keep your family.
- ▶ Be a healthy role model for others.

When should you clean your hands?

Before:

- ▶ Preparing or eating food.
- ▶ Caring for someone who is sick.
- ▶ Treating a cut or wound.
- ▶ Putting in contact lenses.



After:

- ▶ Going to the bathroom.
- ▶ Contact with body fluids such as blood, vomit, or feces.
- ▶ Changing diapers or helping someone with toileting.
- ▶ Caring for someone who is sick.
- ▶ Blowing your nose.
- ▶ Coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ Touching an animal or handling their toys or waste.
- ▶ Handling garbage, trash cans, or drains.
- ▶ Treating a cut or wound.
- ▶ Handling raw meat.

Simply put: Clean your hands often, whether they look dirty or not.

How should you clean your hands?

You can clean your hands using soap and water. Or, you can use an alcohol hand cleaner.

With soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with clean running water.
2. Add soap to make suds and scrub all over your hands and wrists.
3. Rub:
 - Palms.
 - Back of hands.
 - Between the fingers.
 - Fingers.
 - Wrists.
4. Continue rubbing hands for at least 20 seconds.
5. Rinse hands well under running water.
6. Dry your hands using a clean paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the water and to open the door when leaving the restroom.

Need a hand washing timer? Sing “Happy Birthday” through twice in your head!

With alcohol hand cleaner:

1. Apply product to the palm of one hand (see product label for directions/enough to use on BOTH hands.)
2. Rub:
 - Palms.
 - Back of hands.
 - Between the fingers.
 - Fingers.
 - Wrists.
3. Keep rubbing until hands are dry, at least 30 seconds

Use soap and water instead of alcohol hand cleaner:

- ▶ When your hands are visibly dirty.
- ▶ Before eating or preparing food.
- ▶ After handling raw meat.
- ▶ After handling animal waste.
- ▶ After going to the bathroom.
- ▶ After changing a diaper.
- ▶ After assisting someone with toileting.

Most alcohol hand cleaners from grocery or drug stores contain alcohol to reduce or kill most germs and viruses. They come in all sizes – even ones that fit in a child's pocket.

How can you help others to clean their hands?

- ▶ Lead by example and clean your own hands often.
- ▶ Teach your friends and family when and how to keep their hands clean.
- ▶ Keep alcohol hand cleaner handy. Place it near you at work, each room at home, and in your car. Teach your family and friends to do the same.
- ▶ Teach your children good hand cleaning habits, like cleaning their hands before touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

One way to remind everyone of when to clean hands is to put a bottle of alcohol hand cleaner next to each box of tissues in your home.

Don't be afraid to ask anyone, including health care providers, to clean their hands before touching a patient.

If you are a patient or a visitor in a hospital or medical facility:

- ▶ Clean your hands and ask your family to do the same:
 - Before entering a patient room or touching a patient.
 - After leaving a patient room or touching a patient.
- ▶ See that staff put on gloves before touching broken skin or open wounds.
- ▶ Use alcohol hand cleaners in halls or in patient rooms.
- ▶ Ask staff about the steps the hospital is taking to help staff keep their hands clean.
- ▶ Ask or remind hospital staff to clean their hands before and after touching a patient.

Learn more:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):

Infection: Don't Pass It On

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/infectiondontpassiton/index.asp>

Hand Hygiene Video

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/materials/videos.asp>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

CDC TV: Put Your Hands Together

www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/HandsTogether/

Hand Hygiene Saves Lives

www.cdc.gov/Features/HandHygiene/

Wash Your Hands

www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/

An Ounce of Prevention Keeps the Germs Away; Seven Keys to a Safer Healthier Home

www.cdc.gov/ounceofprevention/docs/oop_brochure_eng.pdf