

Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs and infection. Clean your hands using soap and water. Or, an alcohol hand rub can be used when your hands are not visibly dirty.



Clean Hands

Germs can be spread from your hands to items around you such as doorknobs, grocery carts, handrails, phones, and computer keyboards. After, others may touch these items and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. This is just one way that germs pass from one person to another. Keeping your hands clean helps you:

- ◆ Avoid getting sick.
- ◆ Avoid spreading germs to others.
- ◆ Keep your family and community healthy.
- ◆ 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 rub (same as alcohol hand sanitizer).

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 rub (alcohol hand sanitizer):

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.

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

Use soap and water instead of alcohol hand rub:

- ◆ 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.

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.

- ◆ Make alcohol hand rub convenient to use. Keep it in places around you such as work, home, and 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.
- ◆ See staff cleaning their hands with an alcohol hand rub or soap and water before and after they touch a patient.
- ◆ See staff putting on gloves before touching broken skin or open wounds.
- ◆ See alcohol hand rub in hallways or near patient rooms.
- ◆ Ask doctors, nurses, and other 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.

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

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.

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

For more on clean hands see:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):

Infection: Don't Pass It On

www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn/

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/ooop_brochure_eng.pdf