

# Hand Hygiene



## Why

Many outbreaks of foodborne illness are traced to unwashed or poorly washed hands.

Sneezing and coughing can spread cold germs into the air, but most colds are caught and spread through germs on people's hands.

The germs that cause the flu, SARS, hepatitis A, and many kinds of diarrhea can also be picked up and spread by your hands.

If these germs are on your hands, touching your mouth or nose to eat, sneeze or cough can make you sick.

Touching a doorknob, pressing an elevator button, grabbing a pole on public transit or shaking hands can spread germs to others.

Imagine looking at your unwashed hands under a microscope. What would you see growing there?

## When

Always wash your hands:

### Before you

- touch or serve food
- eat or drink
- put in or take out contact lenses
- treat a cut, scrape, burn or blister
- take care of someone who is sick

### After You

- go to the bathroom
- help someone else use the bathroom
- change a diaper (don't forget to wash the baby's hands too!)
- cough, sneeze, blow your nose or wipe a child's nose
- handle uncooked food, especially raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs
- handle garbage
- touch an animal—especially a reptile—or clean up animal waste
- take care of someone who is sick or injured
- use public transportation



## How

Washing our hands is a lesson we all learned as children, but when we're busy or in a hurry, we tend to rush or forget to do it. We think our hands are clean, but they're not if we haven't done it right.

Just rinsing your hands isn't washing them, it's wetting them. To get them clean you need to use soap.

A quick rub, even with soap, won't get your hands clean, and the few seconds you save could cost you days if you get sick later.

To make sure your hands are really clean, scrub your palms, between your fingers, the backs of your hands and under your fingernails for at least 20 seconds.

After rinsing, dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the same paper towel to turn off the water and open the restroom door.

Use regular soap. Antibacterial soap isn't necessary. These soaps do kill bacteria, but anti-bacterial soaps may contribute to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance.

## Did You Know That:

- Soap bubbles trap germs and dirt from your hands?
- 15-20 seconds is like singing one verse of the Happy Birthday song?
- The more soap bubbles you make, the more germs are trapped?
- Hand sanitizers with 60-70% alcohol content are the most effective?
- Hand sanitizers work best if there is no visible dirt on hands?
- Hand sanitizers do not cause dry hands?
- Hand sanitizers are safe for children? (supervise during use and store safely)
- Germs grow rapidly on moist and wet surfaces?
- Most germs and viruses are spread by hands - more than coughing and sneezing?



Wet hands



Apply soap and rub  
for 20 seconds



Rinse



Dry with  
paper towel



Use towel to  
turn off faucet