



Wash Your Hands



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

Handwashing is easy to do and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many types of infection and illness in all settings—from your home (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/hand/handwashing-family.html>) and workplace (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/hand/handwashing-corporate.html>) to child care facilities and hospitals (<http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/>). Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community.

Learn more about when and how to wash your hands.

When should you wash your hands?

- **Before, during, and after preparing food**
- **Before eating food**
- **Before and after caring for someone who is sick**
- **Before and after treating a cut or wound**
- **After using the toilet**
- **After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet**
- **After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing**
- **After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste**
- **After touching garbage**



What is the right way to wash your hands?

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

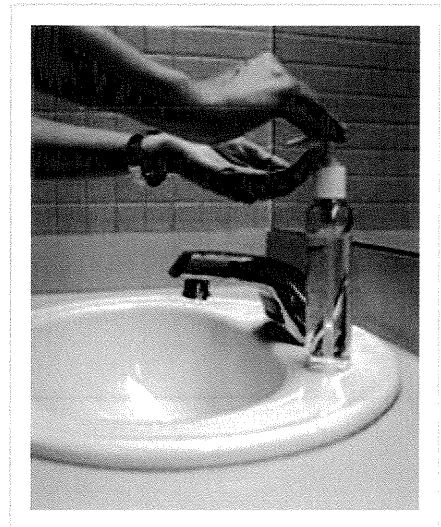


Why? Read the science behind the recommendations

(<http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html>)

What should you do if you don't have soap and clean, running water?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs.



Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

How do you use hand sanitizers?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Why? Read the science behind the recommendations

(<http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>)

For more information on handwashing, please visit CDC's [Handwashing website](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing) (<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing>). You can also call 1-800-CDC-INFO or [contact CDC-INFO](http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>) for answers to specific questions.

More Information

CDC's Handwashing Work

- [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>)
- [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene) (<http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene>)
- [Water-related Hygiene](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/index.html>)
- [Hand Hygiene to Help Prevent Flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>)

- [Hand Hygiene During an Emergency \(http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/sanitation.asp\)](http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/sanitation.asp)
- [Hand Hygiene Aboard Ships \(http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp/pub/Handwashing/HandwashingTips.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp/pub/Handwashing/HandwashingTips.htm)

Health Promotion & Education

- [Health Promotion Materials \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/resources.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/resources.html)
 - [Fact Sheets \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/fact-sheets.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/fact-sheets.html)
 - [Podcasts \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/podcasts.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/podcasts.html)
 - [Posters \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html)
 - [Social Media \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/social-media.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/social-media.html)
 - [Stickers \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/stickers.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/stickers.html)
 - [Videos \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html)
 - [Web Features \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/web-features.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/web-features.html)
- [Training & Education \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html)
 - [Classroom Lessons & Activities \(http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#classroom\)](http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#classroom)
 - [Learning Tools & Materials \(http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#learningtools\)](http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#learningtools)
 - [Atlanta, Georgia-based Opportunities \(http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#atlanta\)](http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/handwashing/training-education.html#atlanta)
- [Our Partners \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/partnerships.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/partnerships.html)

Publications, Data & Statistics

- [Publications, Data, & Statistics \(http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/publications-data-stats.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/publications-data-stats.html)

Global Handwashing Day

- [Global Handwashing Day \(http://www.cdc.gov/features/globalhandwashing/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/features/globalhandwashing/index.html)
- [globalhandwashingday.org \(http://www.globalhandwashingday.org\)](http://www.globalhandwashingday.org)

References

1. [globalhandwashingday.org \(http://globalhandwashingday.org\)](http://globalhandwashingday.org)
2. Fewtrell L, Kaufmann RB, Kay D, Enanoria W, Haller L, Colford, JM., Jr. [Water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions to reduce diarrhea in less developed countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis \(http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15620560\)](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15620560). Lancet Infect Dis. 2005 Jan;5 (1):42-52.

3. Curtis V, Cairncross S. Effect of washing hands with soap on diarrhoea risk in the community: a systematic review (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12726975>). The Lancet Infectious Diseases, Vol. 3, May 2003, pp 275-281. Lancet Infect Dis. 2003 May;3(5):275-81.
4. WELL Fact Sheet (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/fact-sheets/factsheets-htm/Handwashing.htm>)
5. UNICEF, State of the World's Children (<http://www.unicef.org/sowc08/report/report.php>), 2008.
6. Liu P, Macinga DR, Fernandez, ML, Zapka C, Hsiao H, Berger B, Arbogast JW, Moe CL. Comparison of the activity of alcohol-based handrubs against human noroviruses using the fingerpad method and quantitative real-time PCR (<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12560-011-9053-x>). Food Environ Virol. 2011 Mar;3(1):35-42.

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