

Wash Your Hands to Stay Healthy

Question: What's the best way to keep adults and children from getting sick?

Answer: Wash your hands!

You've heard it said a thousand times since you were a child, but many people still don't wash their hands as often as they should.

Why Wash Your Hands?

Germs are everywhere: on people, on toys, doorknobs, tables, and on animals. You pick up the germs on your hands, and then infect yourself when you touch your eyes, your nose, or your mouth. You can spread germs when you touch the children or things they touch. Before you know it, you and all the children are sick. The most important thing you can do to keep you and the children from getting sick is to wash hands.

When Should You Wash?

You will need to wash your hands often to get rid of the germs.

Hands should be washed before and after:

- Preparing food or beverages.
- Eating, handling food, or feeding a child.
- Giving medication or applying an ointment or cream to a child who may have cuts, sores, or scrapes to his skin.
- Playing in water that is used by more than one child, such as a water table.

Hands should be washed after:

- Using the toilet or helping a child to use the toilet.
- Changing a child's diaper.
- Handling body fluids, including those from: mucus, blood, vomit, sneezing, wiping and blowing noses, touching mouths, or touching sores.
- Touching animals or cleaning up animal waste.
- Playing outdoors.
- Playing in sand or on wooden play sets.
- Cleaning.
- Handling garbage.



Washing hands is the most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick.



The Best Way to Wash

Follow these steps for proper handwashing:

Washing Baby's Hands

1. Wash a baby's hands with plain soap and a clean, warm, wet cloth.
2. Rinse the cloth in warm water or get another clean, warm, wet cloth to rinse baby's hands.
3. Dry hands well.

How Long is 20 Seconds?

Many people don't take time to wash long enough. To make sure you're washing long enough, sing "Happy Birthday" **twice** while you and the children wash. You may want to make up your own handwashing song. When the song ends, hands should be clean. Most children love to sing as they wash their hands.

What About Antibacterial Soaps?

You don't need to use antibacterial soap to do a good job of handwashing. Regular soap and warm water work very well. Some researchers think that antibacterial soaps may do more harm than good, killing the helpful as well as the harmful bacteria.