

HANDWASHING

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

The most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of illness is to wash your hands and your children's hands thoroughly and often. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can also significantly reduce the number of germs on the skin.

This is how you should wash your hands:

- Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds using warm running water and soap. Make sure you have lots of bubbles.
- Wash under fingernails, between fingers, back of hands and wrists.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.

In public bathrooms:

- Dry your hands with a single-use paper towel (or hot air blowdryer).
- If your towel dispenser has a handle, be sure to roll the paper down before you wash your hands. This helps to insure that you will not pick up new germs from the handle.
- For hand-held faucets, turn off water using a paper towel instead of bare hands so you will not pick up new germs on your clean hands. You may want to open the bathroom door with the same paper towel and then throw it away.
- In the home, change handwashing towels often.

How to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together until dry.
- Make sure to cover all surfaces of hands and nails.
- Remember that the volume of sanitizer needed to reduce the number of germs varies by product.

These are times when you should wash your hands:

- after you use the bathroom or help someone else use the bathroom.
- after you change a diaper.
- after you handle items soiled with body fluids or wastes such as blood, drool, urine, stool or discharge from nose or eyes.
- after you clean up messes, such as animal waste or garbage.
- after you handle a sick child.
- before you prepare or serve food.
- before you eat or drink.
- before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- upon exit from a doctor's office, medical facility, or hospital.

Show children how to wash hands correctly. They should wash when:

- they arrive home from daycare, a friend's home, shopping, an outing or school.
- they use the toilet or have their diapers changed.
- they have touched a child who may be sick or have handled soiled items.
- they eat or drink.

Health Tip:

Keeping fingernails trimmed and avoiding the use of artificial nails can increase the effectiveness of handwashing.

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