



National Hand-Washing Awareness Week

December 5-11, 2011

Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. However, if soap and clean water are not accessible, as is common in many parts of the world, use soap and available water or an alcohol-based product containing at least 60% alcohol to clean hands. Appropriate hand hygiene practices include not only washing hands but also keeping fingernails trimmed and clean. This initiative provides guidance on [appropriate hand washing](#) etiquette for the public, [appropriate hand washing techniques for health care providers](#), appropriate use of hand sanitizers, and [nail hygiene](#). Remember, [clean hands save lives!](#)

When Should You Wash Your Hands

Many diseases and conditions can be spread through inadequate hand hygiene as a result of not washing hands. Hands should always be washed:



- Before and after preparing food
- Before and after eating food
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who used the toilet
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

Hand hygiene is critical to interrupt the spread of infectious diseases, such as the common cold, influenza, and gastrointestinal illnesses.

The Right Way to Wash Your Hands

There is a right way to wash your hands. A splash of water and a drop or two of soap will not do the trick. Follow these simple steps to keep your hands clean:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
2. Use whatever soap you like. Antibacterial soaps are popular but regular soap works fine. If you suspect that your hands have been exposed to someone with an infection, think about using an alcohol hand sanitizer.
3. Rub your hands together vigorously and scrub all surfaces: Lather up on both sides of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers.
4. Scrub your fingernails.
5. **Wash for 20 seconds - about how long it takes to sing a few verses of "Happy Birthday."**
6. Rinse well under running water,
7. Air dry or pat dry with a clean towel.

- ☑ ***In public restrooms, consider using a paper towel to flush the toilet and open the door because toilet and door handles harbor germs. Throw the towel away after you leave.***
- ☑ ***To prevent chapping or dry skin, use a mild soap with warm water, pat rather than rub hands dry, and apply a moisturizing lotion liberally afterwards.***
- ☑ ***When there is no soap or water available, waterless hand soaps or scrubs are a good alternative. They are usually available as a liquid, wipes, or towelettes, and often come in small travel sizes that are perfect for keeping in your book bag, car, locker, purse, or sports bag.***

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. 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 germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs. **Hand sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty.**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

How should you use hand sanitizer?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.



Water Related Hygiene

Hygiene refers to behaviors that can improve cleanliness and lead to good health, such as frequent hand washing, face washing, and bathing with soap and water. In many areas of the world, practicing personal hygiene etiquette is difficult due to lack of clean water and soap. Many diseases can be spread if the hands, face, or body are not washed appropriately at key times.

Hand Hygiene in Health Care Settings

Proper hand hygiene in health care settings is integral to the prevention of infections. CDC has a number of resources for health care providers, including [guidelines for proper hand hygiene](#) [PDF - 495 kb] and an [interactive training course on standards to prevent healthcare-associated infections](#). To learn more, please visit CDC's [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#) page.

The [Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings](#) provides health-care workers (HCWs) with a review of data regarding hand washing and hand antisepsis in health-care settings. In addition, it provides specific recommendations to promote improved hand-hygiene practices and reduce transmission of pathogenic microorganisms to patients and personnel in health-care settings. This report reviews studies published since the 1985 CDC guideline (Garner JS, Favero MS. CDC guideline for hand washing and hospital environmental control, 1985. Infect Control 1986;7:231--43) and the 1995 APIC guideline (Larson EL, APIC Guidelines Committee. APIC guideline for hand washing and hand antisepsis in health care settings. Am J Infect Control 1995;23:251--69) were issued and provides an in-depth review of hand-hygiene practices of HCWs, levels of adherence of personnel to recommended hand washing practices, and factors adversely affecting adherence. New studies of the in vivo efficacy of alcohol-based hand rubs and the low incidence of dermatitis associated with their use are reviewed. Recent studies demonstrating the value of multidisciplinary hand-hygiene promotion programs and the potential role of alcohol-based hand rubs in improving hand-hygiene practices are summarized. Recommendations concerning related issues (e.g., the use of surgical hand antiseptics, hand lotions or creams, and wearing of artificial fingernails) are also included.



Hand Hygiene Technique Posters

[How to Wash Your Hands Poster](#) [PDF - 457 KB]

[How to Rub Your Hands Poster](#) [PDF - 426 KB]

Resources and Publications

- ["All You Have to Do is Wash Your Hands" podcast](#)
- [Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Prevent Germs](#)
- [Healthy Habits Keep You Well](#)

For more information, visit CDC's [Clean Hands Save Lives!](#)

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