

### Why is hand washing important?

Hand washing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Good hand washing technique is easy to learn and can significantly reduce the spread of infectious diseases among children and adults.

### When should I wash my hands?

- After using the bathroom or helping a child to use the bathroom;
- Before making or eating food;
- After sneezing or coughing;
- After blowing your nose;
- After helping your child to blow his/her nose;
- After contact with animals;
- After playing outdoors;
- More frequently when someone at home is sick;
- When hands are visibly dirty.

### Six (6) simple steps to hand washing

1. Wet your hands with warm running water.
2. Apply soap.
3. Rub your hands vigorously together scrubbing **ALL** surfaces for 15 to 20 seconds.
4. Rinse well under warm running water.
5. Pat hands dry thoroughly with a paper towel or hot air blower.
6. Turn off water using a paper towel if available.

### What is good hand washing technique?

By rubbing your hands vigorously with soapy water, you pull the dirt and the oily soils free from your skin. The soap lather suspends both the dirt and germs trapped inside and are then quickly washed away.

### What are alcohol rubs/gels/rinses?

Alcohol rubs/gels/rinses are excellent hand antiseptics, provided they contain more than 70% alcohol. They are widely used in the health care settings, or in situations where running water is not available.

### How do I use alcohol based hand rubs?

Alcohol-based hand rubs should only be used if no visible dirt is present on hands.

1. Apply enough hand rub (the size of a loonie) onto your hands.
2. Rub your hands together to cover all areas of your hands, including under your nails.

3. Use a rubbing motion to evenly distribute the antiseptic product until your hands feel dry.

### Is it safe to use alcohol-based hand rubs on the hands of children?

Yes, it is safe. It should not be swallowed; therefore, young children should be supervised when using it. Store it safely. After application of the hand rub to hands, the alcohol content evaporates.

### What are some mistakes I should avoid regarding hand hygiene?

- DO NOT use a single damp cloth to wash a group of children's hands
- DO NOT use a standing basin of water to rinse hands.
- DO NOT use a common hand towel. Always use disposable towels in childcare or food preparation settings.
- DO NOT use sponges or non-disposable cleaning cloths. Remember that germs thrive on most surfaces.

### What are some ways to help children with good hand washing techniques?

Do not assume that children know how to wash their hands properly. Supervision, especially in a childcare setting, is an essential element in forming good hand washing habits in children.

Children learn by example. Let them observe good hand washing technique from the adults who care for them.

### Take care of your hands

- Use a protective hand cream or lotion at least daily to reduce irritation.
- Studies have shown that using hand cream improves the health of hands and has no negative impact on hand hygiene.
- Keep natural nails short (0.5 cm)

Source: Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – Public Information – Public Health – Hand Washing

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/handwashing/handwashing\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/handwashing/handwashing_mn.html)

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