

Hand washing: Preventing the spread of germs

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps that we can take to avoid getting ill and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.



When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is ill
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing nappies or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching refuse



What if I don't have soap and clean, running water?

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 sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitisers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitisers do not eliminate all types of germs. Hand sanitisers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty.



How do you use hand sanitisers?

- 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.



What is the right way to wash your hands?

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well. Make sure that you scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing 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 running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



Critical support when you need it

Visit optumwellbeing.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.



This programme should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call the local emergency services phone number or go to the nearest accident & emergency department. This programme is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. This programme and its components may not be available in all locations, and coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

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