

Hand washing: Preventing the spread of germs

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick 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 sanitizer 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 sick
- 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 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 as effective when hands are visibly dirty.



How do you use hand sanitizers?

- 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; be sure to 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.



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