

Handwashing and Skin Care

Simple Steps to Stop the Spread of Germs

Clean hands keep everyone healthy and safe

Keeping your hands clean is the best way to prevent getting and spreading germs. You and your family should clean your hands often, especially before eating and after using the toilet or touching surfaces that may contain germs.

There are two different ways to clean your hands:

- Wash hands with soap and water for 15 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub that contains at least 60% alcohol

Using soap and water

The best time to use soap and water is:

- After going to the bathroom
- If hands look dirty
- Before eating
- After contact with body fluids like blood, urine or vomit
- After changing diapers
- After touching animals or pets

Our commitment to you

As health care workers, we are committed to preventing the spread of germs and providing a safe environment for you and your family. We encourage you to take an active role in your and your family's care. **It's okay to ask your health care provider if they've cleaned their hands before caring for you.**

Tips for using soap and water:

Keep soft paper towels or a clean, dry cloth near the sink. Remember that damp towels may harbor germs.

1. Use warm water and plenty of soap. Work up a good lather.
2. Clean the whole hand, under your nails, between your fingers, and up the wrists.
3. Wash for at least 15 seconds (say the ABCs or sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
4. Rinse your hands well under running water to remove soap.
5. Dry your hands well. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the door.

Using an alcohol-based hand rub

The best time to use an alcohol-based hand rub:

- Before entering and after leaving a patient's room when visiting a hospital or clinic
- After touching something that may contain germs (like a used tissue)
- Before and after you have contact with someone who is very sick, very old or very young
- After shaking or holding hands, especially if the other person has a cold or other illness
- After coughing, sneezing, or using a tissue

How to use it:

1. Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers.
4. Rub until your hands are dry.

You will know that you have used enough if it takes at least 15 seconds to dry on your hands.

Skin care

Sometimes, dry skin occurs in spite of our best efforts. Signs of dry skin may flaking, redness, itching, burning, or cracking.

- **To treat dry skin:** soak your hands in warm water, then apply lotion or cream.
- **To help prevent dry skin:**
 - Wear gloves and warm clothing when it is cold out
 - Wash your hands with warm (**not** hot) water
 - Wear rubber gloves when handling cleaning products