



Hand Washing for Parents and Children

Wash your hands often to keep yourself and others healthy. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to help stop the spread of germs that cause illnesses such as colds, the flu, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Why is hand washing so important?

Washing your hands, and your child's hands, is the best way to stop the spread of germs. Viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to 2 days and on hands for up to 5 minutes. When you wash your hands, you help clean them and remove the germs that cause illness.

We pick up germs on our hands from touching people or things around us. Raw foods, pets and many other objects in our daily lives carry germs. Wiping your child's nose or changing a diaper is a common way to get germs on your hands. You cannot avoid getting germs. You can reduce the chance of infecting yourself and others by knowing when to wash your hands.

How can you wash your hands?

1. Wet your hands with warm water.
2. Remove rings or other jewelry on the hands and wrists
3. Wash all parts of your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and rub hands together to create lather. To help children wash their hands, say the ABC's.
4. Rinse hands well under warm running water.
5. Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel.
6. Use the towel to turn off the tap if you are in a public washroom or restroom.
7. You may use hand lotion after you wash your hands.

You can also wash your hands or clean them with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. After applying the gel rub your hands together until the gel is dry. This is an easy way to clean hands as long as your hands are

not visibly dirty. Wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

How can you wash your baby's hands?

1. Wash with soap and a warm, wet, fresh towel, and use either a cloth or paper towel.
2. Rinse well with another fresh, warm, wet towel.
3. Dry well.

When should parents wash their hands?

You should wash your hands before or after you take part in activities that increase your risk of getting or spreading germs.

You should wash your hands before you do the following:

- Prepare or eat food, especially raw foods
- Feed a baby or child, including mothers who breastfeed
- Give a child medicine

You should wash your hands after you do the following:

- Change a diaper
- Take care of a sick child
- Wipe your child's nose
- Help a child use the toilet
- Use the toilet yourself
- Blow your nose
- Touch pets or animals
- Clean pet cages or litter boxes

When should children wash their hands?

Children should wash their hands before they do the following:

- Eat or handle food

Children should wash their hands after they do the following:

- Have a diaper change
- Use the toilet
- Blow their nose
- Play outdoors or in sand
- Play with pets or animals

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
Adapted with permission.

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