

When and How to Wash Your Hands

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. You can help yourself and your coworkers stay health by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

- **Before, during, and after** preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut or wound
- **After** using the toilet
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- **After** touching trash

In addition, if you head out into public for your lunch break or head home after work, make sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after touching surfaces frequently touched by others:

- Door handles
- Gas pumps
- Shopping carts
- Electronic cashier registers/touch screens

Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way:

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



Use Hand Sanitizer When You Can't Use Soap and Water

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label. Just remember:

- Sanitizers do **not** get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.