

Division of Developmental Disabilities Health Care Services

Hand Washing

Washing your hands with soap and water is an easy and effective way to stay healthy. It can also stop illness and infections from spreading to you and others.

Did You Know?

- Soap does not kill germs. It makes the skin slick, causing germs to slide off under running water (scrubbing for 20 seconds is needed).
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a recent study showed that only 31% of men and 65% of women washed their hands after using a public restroom.

Fact Sheet guidelines have been provided as general information, not as a substitution for medical treatment from a physician.



Risk Factors:

When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before and after 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 diapers or cleaning up a child or adult 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 garbage
- When hands are visibly dirty

Be Alert:

The CDC has materials, videos, and tools to improve hand washing. [cdc.gov/handwashing/](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/)

What if soap and water are not available?

- Soap and water are the best way to reduce the number of germs on hands.
- When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands, 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 sanitizer to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the sanitizer over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

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* together for at least 20 seconds. 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.

Reference: [cdc.gov/handwashing/](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/)