



# Wash, Wash, Wash your Hands!

Did you know one of the most important things you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands? During flu season it is even more important to wash your hands to prevent the spread of germs that would result in sickness. Common illnesses that can be prevented through washing hands includes: colds, influenza, food poisoning, Hepatitis A (food-borne viral illness that causes liver inflammation and gastrointestinal upset, and Rotavirus (common cause of diarrhea), among many other things.

Some activities that you should make an effort to wash your hands *before* doing include:

- **Preparing food**
- **Eating**
- **Bushing your teeth**
- **Helping a young child, someone elderly or someone who is sick**

Several activities that you should make an effort to wash your hands *after* doing include:

- **Going to the bathroom**
- **Changing diapers**
- **Touching door knobs, railings, or other surfaces that have been touched by others**
- **Helping a sick person**
- **Blowing your nose**
- **Handling uncooked meat and poultry**
- **Touching animals or anything in an animal's environment**
- **Coughing or sneezing**

There is a right and a wrong way to wash your hands. The best way is to use soap and to rub your hands together under running water. Make sure to follow these steps for the most effective germ removal:

1. **Wet your hands (very warm water works best).**
2. **Apply soap to your hands.**
3. **Rub your hands together to work up a lather. Do this for 15-20 seconds. If you are unsure how long this is, sing the *Happy Birthday* song all the way through two times in your head. Make sure you get under your fingernails, the palms, and the back of the hands.**
4. **Rinse the soap off under running water.**
5. **Dry your hands with a clean towel, paper towel, or an air dryer. If neither of these are present you can let them air dry. If possible use the paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the door.**

There are times when we are doing tasks or we are places where soap and water are not available. In these situations another option is to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This product will get rid of most of the germs on your hands. The proper way to use hand sanitizer is to apply a dime-sized amount to the palm of one of your hands and then rub both of your hands together until they are dry. When using this product make sure to cover all parts of your hands

For more information on proper hand washing techniques go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/>

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