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Hand hygiene

A "handy" way to stay healthy

Help your children maintain proper hygiene to stay healthy and prevent unnecessary illness by getting them into the habit of washing their hands frequently and properly. When should kids (and grownups) wash their hands?

- When they are visibly dirty
- Before preparing and immediately after handling food
- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- After contact with contaminated surfaces (e.g., garbage bins, cleaning cloths)
- After handling pets and domestic animals
- After wiping or blowing one's nose, handling soiled tissues, or sneezing into one's hands
- After contact with blood or body fluids (e.g., vomit, saliva)
- Before and after dressing wounds
- Before and after giving care or visiting someone who is ill or who is less able to fight off infections (e.g., someone with diabetes or cancer)
- Before preparing and taking medication
- Before inserting and removing contact lenses

Running water

When running water is available, wash your hands with plain soap and water

and dry thoroughly. Follow these steps for perfectly clean hands:

- Remove jewellery such as rings
- Wet hands up to the wrists
- Apply enough soap to cover hands
- Work soap under fingernails and around and between joints and fingers for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Rinse off all lather with water
- Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel - take special care to dry thoroughly between fingers
- Turn off the tap with a paper towel or cloth

When clean, running water isn't available

Sometimes clean water is not available - for example, during a drinking water advisory or when you're in a location where the source or quality of water is not known. In these cases, follow the advice of your local public health authority.

Under a 'boil water' or 'do not consume' advisory, hands can continue to be washed using tap water, as described above. However, during a "do not use" advisory, tap water should not be used for hand washing.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer

If you do not have access to water, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

- Place enough alcohol-based hand rub into the cupped palm of one hand sufficient to wet both hands completely
- Rub the liquid into the palms, backs of hands, between fingers and under nails

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