

Hand Washing for Parents and Kids

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 kids' hands is the best thing you can do to stop the spread of germs. When you wash your hands it helps to remove the germs that cause illness. We pick up these germs on our hands from touching things around us such as people, animals, raw foods, pets and many objects in our daily lives. Wiping your child's nose or changing his/her diaper is a common way to get germs on your hands. You can't avoid getting germs on your hands, but you can reduce the chance of infecting yourself and others by knowing when to wash.

When should parents wash their hands?

You should wash your hands before or after you do things that have a high risk of either spreading or picking up germs.

Before you:

- Prepare or eat food (especially raw foods)
- Feed a baby or child (breastfeeding moms need to wash their hands too!)
- Give a child medicine

After you:

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

When should children wash their hands?

Before they:

- Eat or handle food

After they:

- Have a diaper change
- Use the toilet
- Blow their nose

Play outdoors or in sand

Play with pets or animals

What is a good way to wash your hands?

1. Wet your hands under warm running water.
2. Scrub all parts of your hands with soap for at least 15 seconds.
3. Rinse under warm running water.
4. Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel.
5. If you are in a public restroom, use the towel to turn off the tap.
6. Use hand lotion after washing to prevent skin from getting sore.

Waterless hand rinses (alcohol-based) are an easy way to clean your hands. They are as good as a hand wash as long as your hands aren't visibly dirty.

How can you wash your baby's hands?

Wash with soap and a warm, wet, fresh towel (either paper or cloth).

Rinse with another fresh, warm, wet towel.

Dry well.

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

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