

Hand Hygiene Saves Lives!

Why practice hand hygiene?

To make a difference in your own health.

- Hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections, including the common cold, flu, and even hard-to-treat infections, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

When?

You should practice hand hygiene:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- Before and after changing bandages or wound dressings.
- After using the restroom.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After touching commonly touched surfaces, such as counters, doorknobs, or the phone.

How?

With soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with warm water. Use liquid soap if possible. Apply a nickel- or quarter-sized amount of soap to your hands.
2. Rub your hands together until soap forms a lather and then rub all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers, and the area around and under the fingernails.
3. Continue rubbing your hands for 15 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands using a paper towel if possible. Then use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door.

With an alcohol-based hand rub:

1. Rub product all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers, and the area around and under the fingernails.
2. Continue rubbing until your hands are dry. If enough rub was used to kill germs, it should take at least 15 seconds of rubbing before your hands feel dry. You should not rinse your hands with water or dry them with a towel.

Which?

Use soap and water:

- When your hands look dirty.
- After you use the bathroom.
- Before you eat or prepare food.

Use an alcohol-based hand rub:

- When your hands do not look dirty.
- If soap and water are not available.

****Note:** Products that kill germs on the hands (hand sanitizers) should contain 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol (types of alcohol).