

Fact Sheet

Hand Washing:

Clean Hands Save Lives



Hand washing is basic infection prevention and control it involves five simple and effective steps (think Wet, Lather, Scrub, Rinse, Dry) to reduce the spread of diarrheal and respiratory illness to stay healthy. Regular hand washing, particularly before and after certain activities, is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.

When Should a Person Wash Their Hands?

- Before, during, and after handling or preparing food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick or treating a cut or a wound
- After using the toilet or after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After smoking or taking breaks in common break areas
- After touching garbage

Proper Hand Washing

- **Wet** hands with clean, running water (warm), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- **Lather** hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of hands, between fingers, and under nails (using a nail brush).
- **Scrub** hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse** hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** hands using a clean disposable towel or air dry them. (Do not share cloth towels)
- If possible, in work or public settings use a disposable paper towel to shut off the water and open restroom door.

Hand Sanitizers

Washing hands with soap and water is always the best way to reduce the number of microbes on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs. *Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.*

How to use hand sanitizers

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov