



Help prevent infection
wash your hands
regularly



Why should we wash our hands?

Just think of all the things we touched today which would have been touched by other people - money, door handles, cash machines, toilets, phones. Germs can be anywhere. Disease-causing germs enter our body when our unwashed hands touch our nose, mouth or eyes. We can also make others sick by passing on the germs to them.

No one is safe from infection. Germs are so small that we can't see them.

- They can cause illnesses like colds, diarrhoea, vomiting and often more serious, sometimes even life-threatening diseases like meningitis.
- Washing our hands greatly reduces the chances of spreading germs.
- Scientists have discovered that proper hand washing is a good defence against serious infections - around 45% of infections may be prevented by regular hand washing.
- Plain soap and water can stop the spread of disease.

Surely **everyone** does it?

While many people are taught to wash their hands as children, not everyone makes hand washing a priority.

A survey by the Food and Drink Federation in 2001 found that 31% of men and 17% of women said they do not regularly wash their hands after using the toilet.



If we begin to keep track of when we wash our hands, we may find it's not as often as we think.



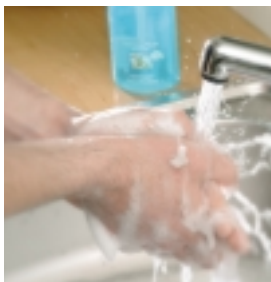
When should we wash our hands?

Before we:

- prepare, serve or eat food;
- treat a cut or wound or tend to someone who is sick;
- insert or remove contact lenses;

After we:

- go to the toilet;
- handle uncooked foods, particularly raw meat, poultry or fish;
- change a nappy;
- blow our nose, cough or sneeze;
- handle rubbish;
- tend to someone who is sick or injured;
- handle an animal or animal waste.

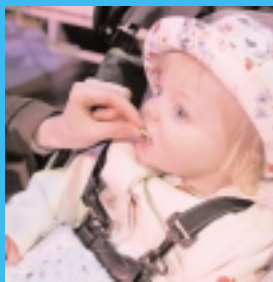


How should we wash our hands?

How we wash our hands is just as important as when we wash them, especially when it comes to eliminating germs. We don't need any special cleaners or cleaning equipment - just soap and water.

When we wash our hands we should:

- use soap and warm, running water;
- wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, between fingers and under fingernails;
- rub hands together for up to 20 seconds;
- rinse away all soap;
- dry hands with paper towel, clean fabric towel or warm air dryer;
- pat the skin rather than rub to avoid chapping and cracking.



How can we help children with good hand washing technique?

It is important to encourage and help children to wash hands properly and often. We shouldn't assume they know how to wash their hands properly. Children also learn by example so it's important that they see us washing our hands properly and regularly.

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