

# INFECTION PREVENTION: HAND WASHING

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Hand washing is the best way to defend against germs and infections.

Wash your hands often throughout the day, especially before and after you eat, and after you go to the restroom. Wash for at least 20 seconds. This is a practice you can get used to while in the hospital, and continue at home.

To properly wash your hands:

Wet your hands thoroughly with warm, running water.

Apply enough soap to cover both your hands and all your fingers. Soap and warm water don't kill the germs, but they do get them off your skin and wash them down the drain. It is your best line of defense against germs.

Rub your hands together, palm to palm and then rub the back of each hand.

Interlace your fingers and rub them together, making sure the soap gets to all surfaces. Don't forget your thumbs.

Use your fingertips to rub the center of your palms. Make sure to clean your fingertips and fingernails also.

Now rinse your hands with warm water, getting all of the soap and germs off your hands.

Dry your hands thoroughly with a single-use towel; finish up by using the towel to turn off the faucet.

When soap and running water is not available, you can still wash your hands. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can actually kill the germs it comes in contact with. But, if your hands are dirty, the alcohol cannot get through the dirt to reach the germs. So if you can see dirt on your hands, it's better to use soap and water.

To properly clean your hands using hand sanitizer, make sure you apply enough sanitizer to cover your hands and fingers thoroughly.

Rub your hands together, palm to palm. Rub the back of each hand.

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Interlace your fingers together and make sure the sanitizer gets to all surfaces; include each thumb.

Use your fingertips to rub the center of each palm. Make sure your fingertips and nails are clean.

Let your hands dry for about 20 to 30 seconds before touching anything.

Get in the habit of following these steps to healthy hand washing. After a couple of times, it will become routine. You won't even think about it.