

Handwashing Safety

The most important thing that you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands. By frequently washing your hands you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.

"People do not wash their hands as often as they think they do. Wirthlin's telephone survey found that 94% of respondents (1004 adults) claimed they always wash up after using the restroom. The observational survey viewed 6333 adults in public restrooms in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans and San Francisco (3236 males and 3097 females) and found that only 68%, in fact, did so."

-- Survey by Wirthlin Worldwide, an international research firm

What happens if you do not wash your hands frequently? **You pick up germs from other sources and then you infect yourself when you touch:**

- Your eyes
- Your nose
- Your mouth

One of the most common ways people catch colds is by rubbing their nose or their eyes after their hands have been contaminated with the cold virus. You can also spread germs directly to others or onto surfaces that other people touch. Before you know it, everybody around you is getting sick.

The important thing to remember is that, in addition to colds, some pretty serious diseases -- like food poisoning, hepatitis A, meningitis, and infectious diarrhea -- can easily be prevented if people make a habit of washing their hands.

"A study of 305 Detroit school children found that youngsters who washed their hands four times a day had 24% fewer sick days due to respiratory illness, and 51% fewer days lost because of stomach upset. Under the supervision of Dr. Susan Longe (then at Providence Hospital and Medical Centers, Southfield, MI) teachers in six classrooms had children wash their hands on arrival, before lunch, after recess, and before leaving for the day. The students' sick days for a 37-day period were compared to eight other classrooms that did not have scheduled handwashing."

-- Survey by Wirthlin Worldwide, an international research firm

When should you wash your hands? You should wash your hands often. Probably more often than you do now. Because you can't see germs with the naked eye or smell them, you don't really know where they are hiding.

It is especially important to wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after you prepare food -- especially raw meat, poultry, seafood products, eggs, and fresh produce
- Before you eat, and after you use the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- Before and after changing a baby's diaper
- After sneezing or coughing into hands, handkerchief or tissue

- After performing any personal body function, such as touching the hair of face area, scratching any part of the body, licking the hands, etc.
- Handling garbage or trash
- When your hands are dirty
- More frequently when someone in your home is sick

What is the correct way to wash your hands?

- First **WET** your hands with warm water and apply liquid or clean bar **SOAP**. Place the bar soap on a rack and allow it to drain.
- Next **SCRUB** your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces - paying special attention to your fingernails where germs can hide
- Continue for about 20 seconds or about the length of a little tune. ***It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.***
Try singing **The Happy Birthday Song (Twice)** to your self. You should be finishing your scrubbing about the time you complete the second round
- **RINSE** well with warm water and **DRY** your hands with a paper towel.
- Use the paper towel to turn the **WATER OFF**.
- Throw away the paper towel.

It is estimated that one out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom. So these tips are even more important when you are out in public.