



# Handwashing

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## What does washing do?

Handwashing is the best line of defense against germs that are spread by touching. If you wash your hands often and properly, you can help prevent infections in yourself and prevent spreading of infections.

## When to wash your hands

Wash your hands often. Wash your hands when they are dirty and at the following times:

- Before you prepare food, and after touching raw meat like chicken or steak
- Before you eat
- After you use the restroom
- After you change your baby's diaper
- Before and after you care for someone who is sick
- After touching animals, such as dogs and cats
- When entering and exiting the hospital

Make sure that children also wash their hands at all of these times. Kids can get infections and spread germs just like adults!

## How to wash your hands

Unfortunately, it is not good enough just to wash your hands often. You also have to wash your hands the right way. Here's how to do it:

1. **Find the towel that you will use to dry your hands.** It is better to use a paper towel because germs can live in wet hand towels. If you have to touch a container or a knob to the towel out, do it before you wash your hands. Hold the towel under your arm until you need it.
2. **Wet your hands with warm water.**
3. **Put soap on your hands.** It is better to use a liquid soap because germs can live on wet bars of soap. Bar soap is acceptable as long as you dry it on a rack.
4. **Rub your hands together for 10 to 15 seconds.** Wash longer if you can still see dirt on your hands. Make sure that you wash in between your fingers, the backs of your hands, your thumbs, and under your fingernails. (Try singing two versus of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" to yourself while you rub to make sure that you are washing long enough).
5. **Rinse your hands thoroughly with warm water.** Make sure that you rinse in between your fingers and under rings.
6. **Pat your hands dry.** If there is a blow dryer for your hands, push the button with your elbow.
7. **Use the towel to turn off the water. If you touch the water faucet after you wash your hands, you may get germs on your fingers again.**

**If hands are not visibly soiled don't forget that alcohol based hand rinses are a great alternative.**