

# How to Wash Your Hands

## Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizers

**Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection. Proper hand washing reduces the spread of colds and influenza by as much as 40%.**

When you wash your hands, you wash away the germs that you may have picked up from other people, from surfaces or from animals. Teach children to wash their hands thoroughly and often, so that hand washing becomes a life-long habit.

There should be **liquid soap, water and disposable paper towels** available for hand washing.

**Use plain liquid soap to wash hands.** Do not use antibacterial soaps or cleaners; these can lead to antibiotic resistance. (See: Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria, page 27)

When washing their hands with soap and water, **children should wash for 20 seconds**; sing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”. Then rinse well.

**Use disposable paper towels to dry hands and throw the towel into the garbage.** “No Touch” garbage cans help reduce the spread of infection.

**When soap and water are not available, children should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.** Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are safe for children to use.

When cleaning their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer, **children should use enough sanitizer to keep their hands wet for 15 - 30 seconds**; follow the directions on the bottle.

### Children should wash their hands:

- before and after eating
- after using the toilet
- after sneezing or coughing or wiping their noses
- when their hands are dirty
- after playing with commonly used toys
- before and after playing at a water table
- after playing outdoors or in a sandbox
- after handling animals or animal waste.

When hands are visibly dirty or if there is diarrhea, warm water and soap should be used instead of a hand sanitizer.



**Posters, video and more materials that show how to wash hands and use hand sanitizer at:**

[sneezesdiseases.com/wash-hands](http://sneezesdiseases.com/wash-hands)