



## Hand-washing

Hand-washing is a simple and effective way to help prevent diseases, such as colds, flu, and food poisoning.

### When to wash your hands

Washing hands:

- Often, especially during cold and flu ([influenza](#)) season, can reduce your risk of catching or spreading a cold or the flu.
- Before and after preparing or serving food reduces your risk of catching or spreading bacteria that cause food poisoning. Be especially careful to wash before and after preparing poultry, raw eggs, meat, or seafood.
- After going to the bathroom or changing diapers reduces your risk of catching or spreading infectious diseases such as [salmonella](#) or [hepatitis A](#).

Wash your hands after:

- Eating or snacking.
- Handling money.
- Touching your ears, nose, or mouth.
- Blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Touching your pets.
- Any kind of cleaning or hand contact with dirty equipment or work surfaces.
- Caring for someone who is sick or injured.
- Taking out the garbage.
- Using the bathroom.
- Changing diapers.

### Proper hand-washing

1. Use warm or hot water when possible. Cold water is not as effective for killing bacteria on your hands.
2. Wet your hands and wrists completely under the running water.
3. Apply a small dab of liquid soap. If you use bar soap, you rinse it off before you use it.
4. Work up a good lather and wash all of the surfaces of your skin, including the wrist, palms, backs of your hands, fingers, and fingernails. Wash your hands for at least 15 to 20 seconds.
5. Rinse your hands thoroughly.
6. Dry your hands. Use your paper towel to turn off the water after you have finished.

If soap and water are not available, use gel hand sanitizers or alcohol-based hand wipes. Most supermarkets and drugstores carry these products. Carry one or both with you when you travel, and keep them in your car or purse.

If using the gel sanitizer, rub your hands until the gel is dry. You don't need to use water; the alcohol in the gel kills the germs on your hands.