

HAND WASHING

PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY



Why is hand washing important?

Hand hygiene is crucial in reducing transmission of infections. It includes both hand washing with plain or antimicrobial soap and water, and use of alcohol-based products (gels, rinses, foams) containing an emollient that do not require the use of water.

Hands are responsible for the spread of 80% of common infectious diseases and hand washing remains one of the easiest and cheapest ways to prevent the spread of bacteria. However, 1 in 5 people don't wash their hands and of those that do only 30% use soap.

When to wash your hands:

Wash your hands before touching anything that needs to stay clean, and after touching anything that might contaminate your hands.

Examples include:

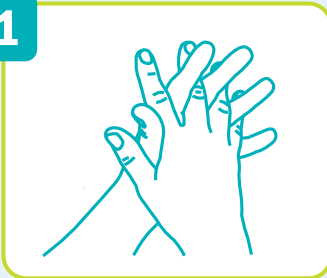
- when your hands are visibly dirty
- after going to the toilet
- after helping a child go to the toilet, or changing a nappy
- after handling rubbish, household or garden chemicals, or anything that could be contaminated
- before you prepare or eat food
- after touching raw meat
- after blowing your nose or sneezing
- after patting an animal
- after cleaning up blood, vomit or other body fluids
- after cleaning the bathroom
- before and after you visit a sick person in hospital
- before and after touching a wound, cut or rash

How to wash

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 15-20 seconds of hand washing, using the outlined steps.

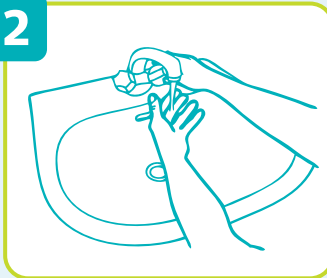
To wash your hands:

1



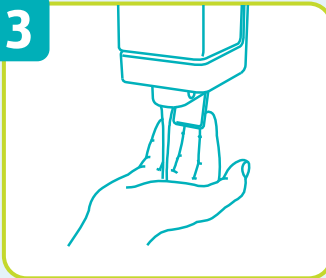
Remove all jewellery, even rings, so you can reach all surfaces on your hands.

2



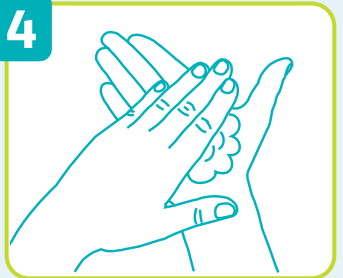
Wet hands with running water (preferably warm).

3



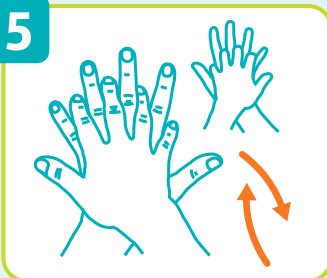
Apply soap or liquid soap. Normal soap is just as good as antibacterial soap.

4



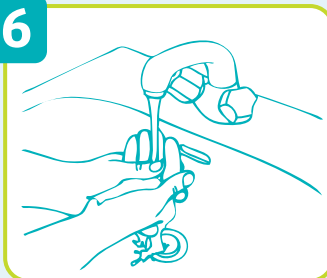
Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces, including the back of your hands and between your fingers.

5



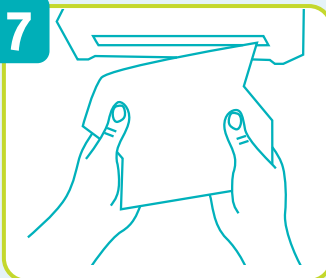
Rub hands together for a further 20 seconds.

6



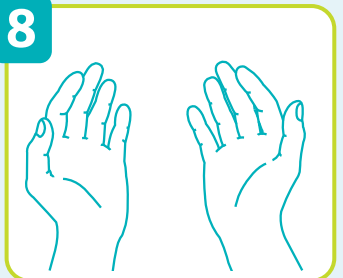
Rinse hands, making sure you remove all soap.

7



Turn off tap using the towel or paper towel.

8



Dry your hands thoroughly with a paper towel, a clean hand towel or an air dryer if you are in a public toilet.

During the lather, pay particular attention to the backs of hands and fingers, fingernails, fingertips and the webbing between fingers.

If hands are visibly soiled or contaminated (eg: you've recently coughed), wash hands with soap (either non-antimicrobial or antimicrobial) and water. In the absence of visible soiling of hands, alcohol-based products for hand disinfection may be used. However, washing hands with soap and water is the most effective method.

To use hand sanitiser:

1. Put about half a teaspoon of the product in the palm of your hand, rub your hands together, covering all the surfaces of your hand, including between your fingers.
2. Keep rubbing until your hands are dry (about 20 to 30 seconds).

Other tips for good hand hygiene

- Carry some hand sanitiser with you and use it whenever you want to decontaminate your hands, for example, after using public transport.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, instead of into your hands.
- Wear disposable gloves before handling dirty nappies or cleaning up blood or any other body fluid.
- Be a good role model and encourage children to wash their hands properly and frequently.
- When using cloth towels to dry your hands, hang the towel up to dry after each use, and launder the towels regularly.

