

# Stop Germs in Their Tracks With Proper Hand-washing



When the weather cools, people stay indoors more often. The number of colds and flulike symptoms increase in the fall and winter as people spend more time indoors.

Did you know that proper hand-washing is the single most important way to help prevent the spread of illness?

Clean your hands thoroughly to help prevent germs from spreading from person to person and throughout a community.

## Quick quiz:

What are the three “ingredients” you need to wash your hands?

**Answer:** Warm running water, soap and a way to dry your hands (clean towel, air dryer)

## When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal or cleaning up after a pet
- After touching garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

## Is hand sanitizer a substitute for hand-washing?

Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to clean your hands. If water is not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based sanitizer with 60% alcohol. Be sure to read the directions to see how much to use. Rub the sanitizer all over your hands and between your fingers until your hands are dry.

## 5 Steps to Proper Hand-washing

- 1** Wet your hands with clean, running water first, then apply soap. (People often reach for the soap before wetting their hands.)
- 2** Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of hands, between fingers and under nails.
- 3** Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice to time yourself.
- 4** Rinse your hands well under running water.
- 5** Dry your hands using a clean towel, paper towel or an air dryer.

## More Information

See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) for more information about nutrition and food safety, and <https://www.cdc.gov/> for more information about health.

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