

Partners in Quality Care

Entering the New Year with a Timeless Infection Control Practice: Hand washing

What you will learn:

- The purpose of hand washing
- The technique for proper hand washing
- How hand washing prevents the spread of disease

Hygiene refers to practices associated with ensuring good health and cleanliness.

In-home aides play a vital role in preventing the spread of disease by learning and practicing proper hand washing and by teaching their client's the importance of proper hand washing. **Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.** Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. If clean, running water is not accessible, as is common in many parts of the world, use soap and available water. **If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.**

Infections are diseases that are caused by bacteria or viruses and are invisible to the human eye. Infections spread when the bacteria and viruses are carried from one site or person to another.

When we have bacteria or viruses on our hands, we can spread them to ourselves or to others that we touch with our hands, this makes hand washing the most important way to prevent spreading infections.

Infectious diseases spread through two types of contact

Direct contact * An easy way to catch most infectious diseases is by coming in contact with someone who has one. This "someone" can be a person, an animal or, for an unborn baby, its mother.

Indirect contact * Disease-causing organisms can also be passed along by indirect contact. Many germs can linger on an inanimate object, such as a tabletop, doorknob or faucet handle. When you touch the same doorknob grasped by someone ill with the flu or a cold, for example, you can pick up the germs he or she left behind.

A simple way to stay healthy

Hand washing doesn't take much time or effort, but it offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Adopting this simple habit can play a major role in protecting your health.



Help keep
Yourself
And your
Clients
Healthy with
Good hand
Washing!



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Hand washing is a simple habit that can help keep you healthy. Learn the benefits of good hand hygiene, when to wash your hands and how to clean them properly.

THE DANGERS OF NOT WASHING YOUR HANDS!!

Despite the proven health benefits of hand washing, many people don't practice this habit as often as they should — even after using the toilet!! Throughout the day you accumulate germs on your hands from a variety of sources, such as direct contact with people, contaminated surfaces, foods, even animals and animal waste. If you don't wash your hands frequently enough, you can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. And you can spread these germs to others by touching them or by touching surfaces that they also touch, such as doorknobs.

Infectious diseases that are commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact include the common cold, flu and several gastrointestinal disorders, such as infectious diarrhea. While most people will get over a cold, the flu can be much more serious. Some people with the flu, particularly older adults and people with chronic medical problems, can develop pneumonia. Good health habits for preventing seasonal flu include proper hand washing to help stop the spread of germs at home, work, and school.

PROPER HAND-WASHING TECHNIQUES- ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR AGENCY SUPERVISOR AND AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO INFECTION CONTROL AND HAND WASHING.

What is the right way to wash your hands?

- **Wet your hands** with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- **Rub your hands** together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- **Continue rubbing** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse your hands** well under running water.
- **Dry your hands** using a clean towel or air dry them.



When should you wash your hands?

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

Resources- Marrelli- Home Health Aide Guidelines for Care, second edition; Mayo clinic.com; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention- Hand washing- Clean Hands save lives.

Everyday Preventive Actions That Can Help Fight Germs, Like Flu

CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu.

CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting influenza (flu). The first and most important step is to get a flu vaccination each year. But if you get the flu, there are prescription antiviral drugs that can treat your illness. Early treatment is especially important for the elderly, the very young, people with certain chronic health conditions, and pregnant women. Finally, everyday preventive actions may slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu. This flyer contains information about everyday preventive actions.



How does the flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through the coughing, sneezing, or talking of someone with the flu. Flu viruses also may spread when people touch something with flu virus on it and then touch their mouth, eyes, or nose. Many other viruses spread these ways too.

People infected with flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days **after** becoming sick. That means you may be able to spread the flu to someone else before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick. Young children, those who are severely ill, and those who have severely weakened immune systems may be able to infect others for longer than 5-7 days.

What are everyday preventive actions?

Everyday preventive actions are steps that people can take to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness, like flu. These include the following personal and community actions:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. This will block the spread of droplets from your mouth or nose that could contain germs.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child gets sick with a respiratory illness, like flu, limit contact with others as much as possible to help prevent spreading illness. Stay home (or keep your child home) for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to seek medical care or for other necessities. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

What additional steps can I take at work to help stop the spread of germs that can cause respiratory illness, like flu?

- Find out about your employer's plans if an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs and whether flu vaccinations are offered on-site.
- Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs, keyboards, and phones, to help remove germs.
- Make sure your workplace has an adequate supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs, and disposable wipes.
- Train others on how to do your job so they can cover for you in case you or a family member gets sick and you have to stay home.
- If you begin to feel sick while at work, go home as soon as possible.



What additional preventive actions can I take to protect my child from germs that can cause respiratory illness, like flu?

- Find out about plans your child's school, child care program, or college has if an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs and whether flu vaccinations are offered on-site.
- Make sure your child's school, child care program, or college routinely cleans frequently touched objects and surfaces, and that they have a good supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs, and disposable wipes on-site.
- Ask how sick students and staff are separated from others and who will care for them until they can go home.



Everyday preventive actions can help slow the spread of germs that can cause many different illnesses and may offer some protection against the flu.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

