

GOOD HAND HYGIENE

ONE OF THE MOST
EFFECTIVE WAYS TO
STOP THE SPREAD
OF GERMS



Be a handwash hero!

Good hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to avoid any type of infection through the spread of germs. Our hands touch numerous surfaces in the course of the day which exposes them to various germs. These germs can enter our bodies and spread serious or fatal infections.

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It is important to understand the difference between washing hands with soap and water and using hand sanitizers when maintaining good hand hygiene. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s guidelines on [Hand Sanitizer Use Out and About](#), soap and water remove all types of germs, while sanitizer only kills a certain type of germs and may not remove other harmful chemicals such as pesticides or heavy metals.

The two most important questions when maintaining a good hand hygiene are:

When to wash hands?

Hand washing should be done often to avoid transmission of germs to others or to yourself. The key times recommended by the [CDC](#) include;

- Before and after preparing food.
- Before eating.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick or attending to a cut or a wound.
- After using the toilet.
- After touching animals, including pets and their associated foods.
- After touching garbage.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose such that the hands are likely to have saliva droplets.

How to wash hands?

Recommendations from the CDC and other scientific research suggests that washing your hands with soap for a minimum of 20 seconds removes harmful germs and chemicals effectively. It takes 20 seconds to sing the "Happy birthday" song twice which can be safely sung even by the bathroom singers amongst us.

The important part is to ensure that hands are well scrubbed so that the lather made from the soap forms pockets called micelles that trap and remove all the germs and contaminants. The 20 second duration is very important, as the soap requires that time to be effective and all the contaminants are washed away once hands are rinsed.

There is no evidence to prove that an antibacterial soap is better than a standard soap. Use of plain soap either bar or liquid form is sufficient to wash your hands free of germs and contaminants.

Do sanitizers work better than soap?

Hand washing with soap and water is the best way to remove all types of germs and contaminants from your hands. Sanitizers must have at least 60% alcohol content for it to be effective against germs and may be ineffective to clean your hands of chemicals or dirt. CDC's recommendation is to use sanitizers only when water and soap are not available.

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soap are not available.

We recommend a read of [CDC's Frequent Questions About Hand Hygiene](#) for answers to more such questions of hand hygiene.

Further information

Gard Loss Prevention posters: [Gard_hand_washing_Lowres.pdf](#)

Loss Prevention Alert: [Managing COVID-19 cases onboard](#)

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