



Hand Hygiene

Patient and Family Education

Good hand hygiene is one of the most important things that you and your family can do to stay healthy.

Why should my child keep his hands clean?

- It can help prevent the spread of germs.
- Germs that cause the common cold, pinkeye, diarrhea and sometimes serious illnesses are often found on the hands.
- You and your child come in contact with germs every day when you use items such as doorknobs, toys, books, telephones, and grocery carts.
- Germs can enter your child's body when unclean hands come in contact with the nose, mouth, eyes, or open cut or sore. Teach your family good hand hygiene. Insist that baby sitters and childcare workers do the same.

Five simple steps for washing your child's hands to help fight germs:

- **Wet** - use warm running water. Using warm water is a comfort measure but it does not kill germs.
- **Lather** - use soap until you get lots of bubbles. You do not need to use anti-bacterial soap unless your child's doctor tells you to.
- **Wash** - Rub hands together, washing the entire hand (all of the fingers, both thumbs, between and under fingernails, back of hands, palms, and wrists) for at least 15 seconds. Singing one verse of "Happy Birthday To You" is about 15 seconds.
- **Rinse** - rinse hands well under running water. Rub your hands together while rinsing to remove all the soap, dirt and germs.
- **Dry** - dry with a paper towel instead of rubbing with a cloth towel.
In the hospital and public restrooms, use a dry paper towel to turn off the faucet.

When to clean hands

You should clean your hands **before**:

- Eating or feeding your child
- Drinking
- Treating a cut or scrape
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Giving medicines

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Hand Hygiene, continued

You should clean your hands **after**:

- Going to the bathroom
- Handling uncooked food
- Touching garbage or anything that might have germs
- Blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Wiping your child's nose
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Playing with or touching pets
- Coming from any kind of public place

Use an alcohol based gel or foam when you can't wash your hands. The alcohol based gels and foams kill germs on your hands, but they do not remove dirt or grime.

You still need to wash hands to get them clean **after** you:

- See dirt or grime on your hands
- Handle uncooked meats
- Change diapers

Never use the alcohol solution **before** you:

- Prepare food
- Touch your eyes or put in or take out contact lenses

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