

CLEANING YOUR HANDS FACT SHEET

How do germs spread?

Cleaning your hands can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of germs. Germs can spread when you:

- **Touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with dirty hands.**
- **Prepare or eat food and drinks with dirty hands.**
- **Touch contaminated surfaces or objects.**

When should I clean my hands?

- **Before, during, and after** preparing food.
- **Before** eating food.
- **Before** and **after** caring for someone who is sick, particularly with vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut or wound.
- **After** using the toilet.
- **After** changing briefs, or assisting another individual in the bathroom.
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
- **After** handling pet food or pet treats.
- **After** touching garbage.
- **If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy.**

When should I use alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)?

In a health care setting, ABHR is the preferred method in most situations.

You can use an alcohol-based hand rub all the time, **unless**:



Hands are visibly soiled.



Contact with blood and/or bodily fluids.



You cared for someone with vomiting and/or diarrhea.

When should I use soap and water?

Soap and water must be used when:



Hands are visibly soiled.



Contact with blood and/or bodily fluids.



You cared for someone with vomiting and/or diarrhea.



After using the restroom.



Before eating.

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How do I correctly clean my hands with soap and water?



Wet your hands.



Lather with soap.



Scrub for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "ABC" song slowly, twice.



Rinse under clean, running water.



Dry with a clean towel.

***Remember, germs can be transferred more easily to and from wet hands.**

How do I correctly use alcohol-based hand rub?



Apply the gel.



Rub your hands together.

***Don't forget the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and thumbs.**

What is the difference between cleaning hands with soap and water and using alcohol-based hand rub?

Soap and water are more effective than alcohol-based hand rub at removing certain kinds of germs like norovirus and *Clostridioides difficile*.

	Soap and Water	ABHR
MOST Activities		✓
Norovirus	✓	
C. diff	✓	
Removes MOST germs		✓
Removes ALL germs	✓	

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