Hand Hygiene

Washing Your Hands to Prevent Spreading Germs

Cleaning your hands (also called hand hygiene) is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs because it is simple and easy. Cleaning your hands often can prevent germs that cause illness from spreading among family members and throughout a community. When your hands are unclean, you can spread germs to others or even yourself by touching your own eyes, nose, or mouth.

When is hand hygiene needed?
- Before, during, and after you prepare food
- Before you eat
- Before you insert or remove contact lenses
- After you use the bathroom or change a diaper
- After handling uncooked foods, especially meat, poultry, or fish
- After handling animals or animal waste
- After you blow your nose, cough, or sneeze
- After you handle garbage or dirty laundry
- When your hands are dirty
- More often when someone in your home is sick
-

Hand hygiene includes both:
- Handwashing (washing your hands with soap and running water)
- Using an alcohol-based hand gel under certain circumstances

Alcohol-based Hand Gels = Use when hands are not visibly soiled!

Alcohol-based hand gels are effective in reducing the number of germ s on your hands, but they cannot remove dirt. The alcohol rubs are fast acting and cause less skin irritation. They also reduce the amount of bacteria on your hands better than washing hands with soap and water. Read the product instructions and use the recommended amount of the product. Place it on your palm and briskly rub your hands together covering all surfaces, until your hands feel dry.

Handwashing with soap and water = Anytime!

Washing hands with soap and water is always good and is the only way to effectively remove substances from soiled hands. Wet your hands and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Rub your hands vigorously together for 15-20 seconds, then rinse well with running water and dry. In public restrooms, use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet handle and open the door.

For more information call Infectious Disease Prevention and
Response at 405-426-8710 or visit us online at
oklahoma.gov/health/InfectiousDisease.

Updated 8/1/2023