

HEALTH LITERACY LESSON

Hand Hygiene & Preventing Illness

Washing your hands is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stop the spread of germs that cause colds, flu, and stomach illness.

When to wash your hands

- Before eating or preparing food
- After using the bathroom
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- After touching animals, animal waste, or garbage
- Any time your hands look or feel dirty

How to wash your hands

- Wet your hands with clean, running water.
- Apply soap.
- Scrub all surfaces, including the backs of hands, between fingers, and under nails, for at least 20 seconds (about the time it takes to hum a short song twice).
- Rinse well under clean water.
- Dry with a clean towel, or let your hands air dry.

No soap and water available?

Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Rub it over all surfaces of your hands until they feel dry.

A tip for families

Teach children this same routine early. Habits formed young tend to stick for life, and children who wash their hands well get sick less often.

This lesson is for general education and does not replace advice from a qualified health professional. If you are concerned about a symptom, please seek medical care.

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