

# Facts About... *Hand Washing*

Why is hand washing important?

Unwashed or poorly washed hands are a very common way of spreading many diseases, such as: colds, flu, ear infections, strep throat, diarrhea, and other intestinal problems.

Such routine things pass germs and viruses causing these diseases as handling food, touching doorknobs, shaking hands, and putting your mouth on a telephone receiver. The spread of many germs and viruses can be reduced by hand washing with soap and water.

When should I wash my hands?

- After using bathroom
- After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing
- Before eating or handling food
- After handling uncooked meat
- After taking out the trash
- After changing a diaper
- After handling money
- After playing with a pet, especially reptiles, iguanas, turtles, snakes

Also, try not to touch your mouth, eyes, or ears when hands are unwashed.

How do I properly wash my hands?

- Use hot or warm running water.
- Lather hands with soap (any kind).
- Rub hands together for at least 10 seconds.
- Wash the back of hands, between fingers, and under fingernails.
- Rinse with warm water
- Pat hands dry, beginning at the wrist and moving down.
- Turn off water, using a paper towel.

How can hand washing help protect my family and me?

Hand washing is the single most important way of preventing the spread of infections, according to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hand washing is the most available "low-tech" prevention of illnesses.

People must take personal responsibility for developing the hand washing habit.

- Parents should teach their children the proper way to wash their hands.
- Children should see their parents and other care givers washing their hands frequently.
- Consumers need to let restaurants; day cares, doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes know they are concerned about personal hygiene and infection control in their facilities.