
COVID-19 CHRONICLE

Hand Washing and COVID-19

Hand washing remains the No. 1 tip for preventing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). It's common sense and it works. However, it must be done properly and with soap and water. When soap and water are not available, the next best option is to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Hand washing in five simple steps:

• **Wet:** Put both your hands under clean, running water.

• **Lather:** Apply a generous amount of soap to the inside and back of your hands as well as your fingertips. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds (sing happy birthday) and don't forget to wash under jewelry and fingernails. Your fingertips are especially important as people often put their fingers on their face, nose, and eyes. This is how the virus spreads.

- **Scrub:** Rub both hands together and move your fingertips around both hands. You don't need a scrub brush. You don't need to make harsh, scrubbing movements.
- **Rinse:** Return both hands to the running water and gently wash away the soap.
- **Dry:** Completely dry the water from your hands. Using a disposable towel (paper towel) is best to avoid leaving germs on towels. Air dryers, commonly found in public bathrooms, are also effective.

When do I need to wash my hands?

Hand washing throughout the day is important, but even more important during an outbreak. Always remember to wash your hands in these situations:

- After returning from a public outing (grocery store, work, school, concert, sporting activity, hospital, nursing home, etc.).
- Before leaving the bathroom — both at home and in public bathrooms.
- After shaking hands during flu season and virus outbreaks.
- Before, during, and after preparing food, especially raw food.
- Before eating food.

- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
- After handling pet food or pet treats.
- After touching garbage.
- After putting on your shoes.
- After using public computers, touching public tables and countertops, cash and coins, other people's phones, etc.

How long should I wash my hands?

Science has shown that washing your hands for 20 seconds is effective in killing germs. Don't have the patience for this? Experts say that washing your hands while singing Happy Birthday **twice** makes the experience quick and pleasant.

When should I use hand sanitizer?

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) is helpful in protecting against the spread of germs and viruses. However, hand washing with soap and water is still best. **Hand sanitizer** is effective when soap and water are not available.

Apply a generous drop of hand sanitizer to the palm of your hand and rub it across both hands, front and back, and fingertips.

Things to consider

- Using clean, running water is important. Never wash your hands by submerging them in a basin or bowl of standing water. This water could contain germs that continue to live there. Sometimes, clean running water is affected by natural disasters (tornados, hurricanes, etc.). There is still some benefit to washing your hands with soap in these situation as long as it is running water.
- Avoid touching doorknobs, toilet flush handles, and faucets after washing your hands. Try using a paper towel, the sleeve of your clothing, a scarf, or gloves to protect your hands and fingers against germs.
- Do not leave hand sanitizer unattended around small children. Drinking it is poisonous.