

Environmental Health & Prevention Services

The “Dirt” on Handwashing

Handwashing is the easiest and most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. The amount and type of germs that "hitchhike" on our hands is overwhelming. Some of these germs cause illnesses such as colds, diarrhea and other more serious diseases.

Forgetting to wash your hands can make you sick or spread germs to others. Germs can cause disease when dirty hands touch a nose, mouth or open wound.

Don't wait for your hands to look dirty before you wash them. There are many times during the day when hands need to be washed.

Wash your hands BEFORE:

- Preparing or eating food
- Treating a wound (yours or someone else's)
- Caring for someone who is ill
- Inserting or removing contact lenses

Wash your hands AFTER:

- Using the washroom
- Changing diapers
- Handling raw meats
- Coughing, sneezing, etc.
- Contact with animals (including pets)
- Caring for someone who is ill
- Handling garbage or anything that might be contaminated

If you can't get to a sink right away, use antibacterial wipes or a sanitizing hand gel. These products are only meant for use where there are no handwashing

facilities readily available. Wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can.

Teach children how to wash their hands properly. It is an important part of their self-care and necessary for healthy hygiene habits.

Drug resistant germs or "superbugs" are becoming a concern. These bugs are spread from person to person through hand contact. Handwashing can easily prevent this spread.

How to properly wash your hands:

- ✓ Use warm running water.
- ✓ Wet your hands & use soap.
- ✓ Rub all parts of your hands together for 10 to 15 seconds.
- ✓ Use lots of friction & remember to wash all surfaces including backs of hands & between fingers.
- ✓ Rinse hands well so they are free of soap.
- ✓ Dry hands with a towel. Turn off the taps with paper towels. This will prevent picking up germs left there by dirty hands.
- ✓ Apply lotion if needed to avoid dry skin. Dry skin can be difficult to clean because germs can live in the cracks.

(See diagram on page 2)

For more information on handwashing contact Environmental Health & Prevention Services at 383-8331 ext. 502 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.



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Your partners in good health!

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CORRECT HANDWASHING PROCEDURE

