HANDWASHING

WASH, WIPE, COVER...
don't infect another!

Questions & Answers

Why should I wash my hands?

Your hands can have germs on them that cause illnesses such as colds, flu and gastroenteritis (gastro). These germs can enter the body when your unwashed hands touch your nose, mouth, eyes and any broken skin. Germs are so small you can't see them so it is important to wash your hands even if they don't look dirty. If hands are washed correctly the chances of germs spreading are greatly reduced.

When should I wash my hands?

Before you:

- prepare or eat food
- treat a cut or wound, or look after anyone who is sick
- put in contact lenses

After you:

- go to the toilet
- blow your nose, cover your cough or sneeze
- handle uncooked foods, ie raw meat
- touch sores or cuts
- change a nappy
- play with, or clean up after animals
- get your hands dirty eg gardening
- handle rubbish

How should I wash my hands?

It's important to wash your hands thoroughly; just giving them a quick rinse is not enough.
Follow these steps:

- wet hands with warm, running water and apply soap.
- wash all surfaces of the hands thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, fingers and under the fingernails.
- rub hands together for at least 10-15 seconds (about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday").
- rinse hands well under running water.
- dry hands thoroughly using a clean cloth towel or disposable paper towel. This is important because wet hands make it easier for germs to be picked up and spread.

What about hand creams?

Applying hand cream after washing can prevent skin dryness and is recommended.

What's the best thing to use for handwashing?

Plain soap and water will do an excellent job. This can be in the form of bar soap or a liquid soap dispenser. There is no need to use an antibacterial soap.

What about waterless hand rubs?

There are alcohol-based hand rubs available that are designed to clean your hands without soap or water, and these can be used in situations when you can't get to a sink. These rubs are not suitable for hands that are visibly soiled.

REMEMBER "WASH, WIPE, COVER – DON'T INFECT ANOTHER!"

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/washwipecover

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