

KEEP HANDS CLEAN

What About Soap?

It doesn't matter what kind of soap you use. It's the scrubbing action under water that removes germs from hands and fingernails. Soap makes the scrubbing easier. Be sure to scrub all sides of each finger, between fingers, and make sure to scrub above and underneath your fingernails.

Anti-bacterial soaps are only effective in killing bacteria. However, people get sick more often from viruses.

Using Hand Sanitizers

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a good alternative when soap and water are not available to wash your hands. Hand sanitizers should supplement – not replace – frequent and proper hand washing throughout the day.

A Word About Gloves

Disposable gloves work great to protect hands from picking up germs or contaminating food. Disposable gloves are often worn by workers in the food and health care industries. Always use gloves properly.

- ▶ Change gloves frequently
- ▶ Do not open doors or touch things with dirty, contaminated gloves
- ▶ Never wash or re-use disposable gloves
- ▶ Wash hands between glove changes and after removing gloves

Many Germs are Spread by Unwashed Hands

The most common germs that cause disease can be eliminated by effective hand washing:

- ▶ Influenza
- ▶ Strep throat
- ▶ Hepatitis A
- ▶ Staph infection
- ▶ Shigella
- ▶ Common cold
- ▶ E. coli
- ▶ Norovirus
- ▶ Salmonella
- ▶ Pink eye



"Healthy People in Healthy Communities"
10777 Main Street • Fairfax, VA 22030
703-246-2411, TTY 703-591-6435
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd



A Fairfax County, Va., publication
October 2006

The information in this document can be made available in alternative formats. Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination and equal access in all county programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations upon request. Call the Health Department's ADA representative at 703-246-8401, TTY 703-591-6435. Please allow seven working days in advance in order to make the necessary arrangements. We provide services without regard to race, color, age, natural origin, sex, religion, or disability.

WASH YOUR HANDS

to Stop the Spread of Germs
and Prevent Disease



WHY WASH?

- ▶ The most important – and easiest – action we can take to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to wash our hands.
- ▶ Germs that cause disease are so small they cannot be seen, but they can be easily transferred from unwashed hands to many objects that other people touch.
- ▶ Some viruses and bacteria can live on surfaces (door handles, shopping carts, telephones, keyboards, food, elevator buttons, money, gas pumps) for two hours or longer.
- ▶ Germs can live two hours or longer on our own hands and fingernails. Germs live the longest under fingernails because of the moist, warm environment.
- ▶ Germs often enter our bodies when we touch our eyes, nose and mouth with our own unwashed hands!
- ▶ There is no way to know whether other people's hands are clean and germ-free. Chances are, you won't be able to disinfect every single thing you touch. This is why you must keep **your** hands clean.
- ▶ Wash your hands frequently throughout the day, and thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

HOW TO WASH



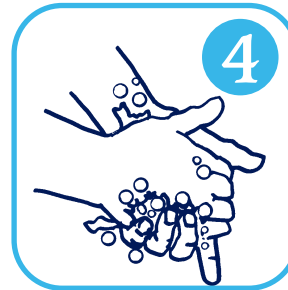
Start with warm or hot water



Use soap and make a lather



Rub and scrub thoroughly for 20 seconds



Scrub palms, back of hands, between fingers and under fingernails



Rinse well, and then use a paper towel to shut off faucet



Dry hands completely

WHEN TO WASH



Hands should always be washed after:

- ▶ Using the toilet
- ▶ Coughing, sneezing or using a tissue
- ▶ Eating, drinking or smoking
- ▶ Touching cuts, burns or infected areas on the skin
- ▶ Handling raw meat and poultry
- ▶ Changing diapers
- ▶ Touching animals
- ▶ Touching public surfaces like door handles, gas pumps, shopping carts, etc.

Hands should always be washed before:

- ▶ Touching eyes, nose or mouth
- ▶ Inserting or removing contact lenses
- ▶ Preparing food
- ▶ Eating

STOP SPREADING GERMS:

When you are sick, always cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then wash your hands thoroughly.

If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or other article of clothing.

Do not cough or sneeze into your hands. If you do, wash your hands as soon as possible.