

# 5 myths of handwashing

**Myth 1** Very hot water is necessary.

**fact** Hot or cold water causes discomfort and ineffective washing and rinsing. Most soaps work with water that is 45° to 130°F but the most effective water temperature is 98° to 110°F. This is comfortably warm to most people. Using water that is too hot also removes some of the protective oils naturally found on skin.

**Myth 2** Antimicrobial soap is necessary.

**fact** Studies have shown that ordinary soap (those without antimicrobial components) work just as well at preventing bacteria and germ transmission as antimicrobial soap products.

**Myth 3** Cloth towels work fine to dry hands.

**fact** Bacteria numbers increase in damp towels leading to recontamination of hands. A paper towel is your best choice for drying hands.

**Myth 4** Hand sanitizers are as good as washing.

**fact** Hand sanitizers do not work on soiled hands and are ineffective against NOROVIRUS, the leading cause of gastroenteritis in the United States. Washing with soap and water is your best bet for clean hands.

**Myth 5** You only need to wash after using the bathroom.

**fact** Wash your hands after any possible contact with fecal material. This is always after using the restroom, changing a diaper (wet or otherwise), or petting an animal.



## ***Other times that you must wash your hands***

**After any contact with juices from uncooked meats and poultry.** These animal products may be contaminated with a variety of illness-causing bacteria.

**Before preparing foods.**

**Before eating.**

**After contact with items that are likely to have been touched by many people** such as money, bingo markers, counters, door handles, etc.

... and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jack M. Payne, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.

**N3503a March 2007** Supported with funds from the Iowa Food Safety Task Force File: FN1