



## Hand Washing: Key to Flu Prevention

One of the best ways to avoid getting sick is to simply wash your hands. Harmful bacteria and viruses can accumulate on your hands throughout the day. If your hands are not washed properly and frequently, you can infect yourself through contact with your eyes, nose or mouth. You can also spread bacteria and viruses to others by contact. Hand-to-hand contact can spread infectious diseases such as the common cold, gastrointestinal diseases, and the flu. We are in the middle of flu season and along with an influenza vaccination, proper hand washing can help protect yourself and the ones you love from the flu.

Here are the steps to proper hand washing:

- Wet your hands with warm, running water and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Lather well.
- Rub your hands vigorously together for at least 15 seconds. Tell children to wash their hands for as long as it takes them to sing their ABC's or the "Happy Birthday" song.
- Scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers, and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

In the event that soap and water is not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used to clean your hands.

Proper use of a hand sanitizer includes:

- Apply about ½ teaspoon of the product in the palm of your hand.
- Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry.
- If your hands are visibly dirty, however, wash with soap and water rather than a sanitizer.

Hand washing may seem like a simple act, but it provides one of the best methods of protection against catching the flu and other illnesses.

Reference: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/hand-washing/HQ00407](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hand-washing/HQ00407)