

# Handwashing

## FACT SHEET



Washtenaw County  
Health Department

The most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of illness is to wash your hands thoroughly and often. If you work with children please consider teaching them how to wash their hands using the same methods described below.

### The best way to wash hands

- Rub your hands together quickly for at least 20 seconds using warm running water and soap. (Singing “Happy Birthday” is an easy way to time yourself).
- Make sure that you have lots of bubbles.
- Wash under fingernails, between fingers, backs of hands and wrists.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands with a single-use paper towel or hot air blow dryer.
- If your towel dispenser has a handle, be sure to roll the paper down before you wash your hands. This helps to insure that you will not pick up new germs from the handle.
- For hand-held faucets, turn off water using a paper towel instead of bare hands so you will not pick up new germs on your clean hands. You may want to open the bathroom door, if possible, with the same paper towel and then throw it away.
- If soap and water are not available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

### When you should wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food.
- Before eating food.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After using the toilet.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After touching an animal or animal waste.
- After handling pet food or pet treats.
- After touching garbage.

### When you should wash your children’s hands:

- When they arrive home from day care, school or a friend’s home, come in from outdoors.
- After they use the toilet or have their diaper changed.
- After they have touched a child who may be sick.
- After touching or playing with animals/pets.
- Before they eat or drink.

**Remember: It is never too late and no child is too young to learn how to protect themselves from germs!!**

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*