

Washing your hands

Hand washing is important:

- ◆ If hands are not clean they can spread germs.
- ◆ You should wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water and especially:
 - ◆ When hands look dirty
 - ◆ Before and after preparing, serving or eating food
 - ◆ Before and after dealing with sick people
 - ◆ Before and after changing the baby's nappy
 - ◆ Before and after treating a cut or a wound
 - ◆ After handling raw meat
 - ◆ After going to the toilet or bringing someone to the toilet
 - ◆ After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
 - ◆ After handling rubbish or bins
 - ◆ After handling an animal or animal litter/droppings
 - ◆ After contact with flood water
- ◆ A quick rinse will not work – your hands will still have germs. To wash hands properly:
 - ~ Rub all parts of the hands and wrists with soap and water for at least 15 seconds (or as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday to you" song two times!)
 - ~ Don't miss out on washing your finger tips, between your fingers, the back of your hands and the bottom of your thumbs – the pictures here will help.

Getting ready to wash your hands:



- ◆ Remove hand & wrist jewellery - rings, watch, bracelets



- ◆ Wet hands thoroughly under warm running water



- ◆ Apply a squirt of liquid soap to cupped hand

Washing your hands - take at least 15 seconds/the time it takes to sing the "Happy birthday to you" song twice!



- ◆ Rub palm to palm 5 times making a lather/suds



- ◆ Rub your right palm over the back of your left hand and up to your wrist 5 times
- ◆ Repeat on the other hand



- ◆ With right hand over the back of left hand, rub fingers 5 times
- ◆ Repeat on the other hand



- ◆ Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



- ◆ Wash both thumbs using rotating movement



- ◆ Wash nail beds—rub the tips of your fingers against the opposite palm

Rinsing and drying your hands:



- ◆ Rinse hands well making sure all the soap is gone



- ◆ Dry hands fully using a clean hand towel or a fresh paper towel
- ◆ Bin paper towel after use

**Remember -
Clean hands save lives &
stop the spread of many infections**

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Compiled by Dept of Public Health, Midlands.
January 2016

Adapted from [Handwashing technique poster HSE, Strategy for Antimicrobial Resistance in Ireland](#); additional image: [Dreamstime.com](#), Putting some soap on hands © Adamgregor