

Why is washing your hands important?

The most common way germs are spread is by people's hands.

Germs are often harmless but they can also cause illnesses such as colds and tummy bugs, as well as more serious illnesses such as E.coli and flu.

Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to help to reduce the spread of **infections**.

Washing your hands properly with soap and warm water can help protect you, your family, children and others.

When should I wash my hands?

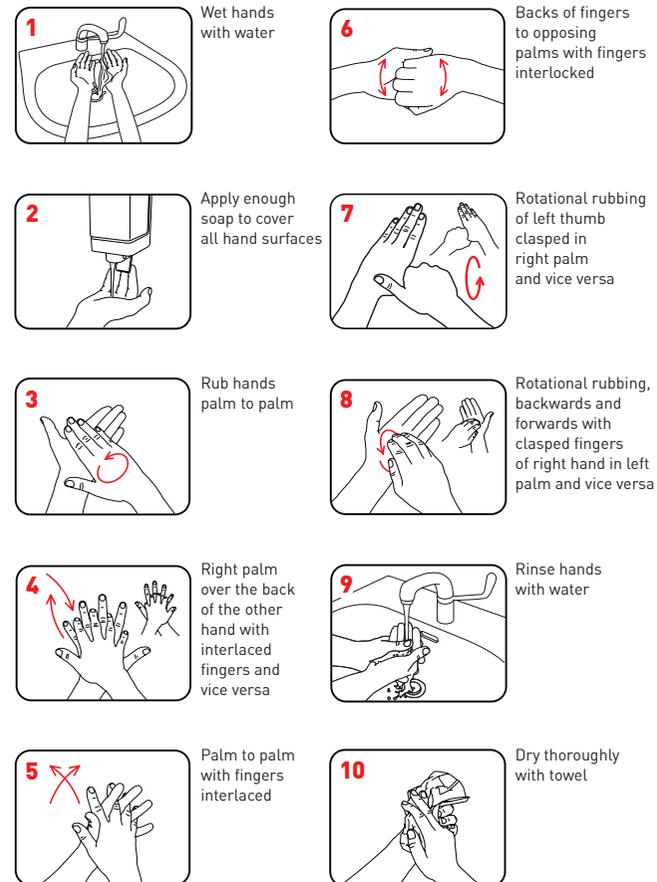
You should make regular and thorough hand washing part of your daily routine, especially:

- Before eating or handling food
- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After handling rubbish
- After changing a nappy
- Before and after touching a sick or injured person
- Before and after visiting a hospital ward (remember alcohol-based hand rubs are also provided)

How do I wash my hands properly?

It takes at least fifteen seconds to wash your hands properly – this is about how long it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday to You' twice through!

Encourage children to wash their hands by showing them how to do it, and by setting them a good example.



Source: World Health Organisation

It is also important to remember the following:

- Remove rings or jewellery before cleaning your hands
- Keep your nails short, as this will make it easier to clean your hands properly
- If you have wound dressings, stitches or catheters try not to touch them any more than is absolutely necessary

Where can I get more information?

For more information and advice about hand washing you can ask the healthcare staff who visit your home.

Alternatively you can get advice from the following places:

Health Protection Agency
www.hpa.org.uk

National Patient Safety Agency's
www.npsa.nhs.uk/cleanyourhands

Help us to prevent infection spreading

For patient, service users and visitors we have chosen to participate in the cleanyourhands campaign as all our staff take infections seriously and are committed to keeping you, our patients, clients and service users as safe and healthy as possible.

Good staff hand hygiene

When our staff clean their hands before and after touching you, it helps stop germs from spreading.

Our staff can clean their hands in two different ways:

- Handrub
- Soap and water

There are certain circumstances when soap and water should be used, such as when hands are dirty or when caring for someone with diarrhoea or vomiting. Handrub is recommended in all other situations.

it's OK to ask

The clean**your**hands campaign helps remind our staff about the importance of hand hygiene when caring for you. Our staff take hand hygiene seriously but sometimes when they're really busy, they might not clean their hands as often as they should. So if you're worried that they've forgotten, **it's OK to remind them!**

We welcome your help in keeping you safe.



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HAND HYGIENE: ADVICE FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR CARERS

