



## HANDWASHING HINTS

### CLEAN HANDS CAN SAVE LIVES

All people carry germs on their hands. Some germs are usually present on our skin and are called resident germs. Some are picked up when our hands touch other people or objects (transient germs). These transient germs are easily transferred from one person to another person or object and can cause sicknesses. Many people think that germs are spread through the air, but more often the germs are spread through our hands.

### OBJECTS CAN ALSO SPREAD GERMS

Objects in a room such as beds and tables can also have germs on them. When a person is sick and coughs or touches different items in the room with their hands, they can leave germs on these objects. When other people touch these objects, the germs can be transferred to their hands, can infect them and can be carried to other people and objects.

### HAND CLEANSING IS IMPORTANT TO STOP THE SPREAD OF ILLNESSES

One of the best ways to keep from spreading germs on our hands is to cleanse hands by washing them or by using an alcohol-containing hand rub. Washing hands with soap and water helps to remove the germs through friction and water rinses them away. This is very important when the contamination can be seen on the hands such as blood or soil. Even if hands look clean, they may still have germs on them. Hands that do not look dirty may be cleansed by using alcohol-containing hand rubs that are very effective at killing most of the germs on the hands. Both hand washing and use of alcohol rubs are good ways to stop germs from spreading from person to person and causing illness.

### HOSPITALS, CLINICS AND HAND CLEANSING

Hand cleansing is very important in clinics, doctor's offices and hospitals because it is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness. Doctors, nurses and other members of your healthcare team see and touch many people and objects each day. Since their hands can have many germs, they understand the importance of good hand cleansing between each patient to prevent the spread of germs.

### PARTNERS IN CARE

It is important that you, the patient, also be a partner in your care and help your healthcare team provide you with the best care. As part of that team, you can play an important role in hand cleansing by asking the doctors, nurses and other members of your healthcare team if they have cleansed their hands before they begin your care. You can work with the healthcare team to prevent the spread of germs and illnesses.

**IT'S OK TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE IF THEY HAVE  
CLEANSED THEIR HANDS.**

## **IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY**

Germs are everywhere in your home and community. Keeping your hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent getting illnesses yourself and from spreading them to others. This can be especially important during cold and flu season.

### **WHEN SHOULD HANDS BE CLEANSED?**

- When hands are visibly dirty
- After using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- After sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing
- After contact with any body fluids such blood or urine
- Before preparing or eating food
- After touching pets or animal waste
- After touching raw meat or chicken
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick or injured

### **WHEN SHOULD SOAP AND WATER BE USED TO CLEANSE HANDS?**

- When hands are visibly dirty
- After using the bathroom
- Before eating or preparing food

### **HOW SHOULD HANDS BE WASHED?**

- Using clean running water, apply soap to all surfaces of the hands and fingers
- Rub hands together vigorously for 15 to 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday 2 times)
- Rinse hands well under running water
- Dry hands using paper towels or a clean hand towel.
- Use the towel to turn off the faucet

### **WHEN CAN ALCOHOL HAND RUBS BE USED?**

- Anytime hands are not visibly soiled.
- When routine cleansing is needed. Alcohol hand rubs can be more effective than soap and water in killing bacteria and virus.
- When soap and water are not available.

### **HOW SHOULD ALCOHOL HAND RUBS BE USED?**

- Apply the alcohol hand rub to the palm of one hand
- Rub the hand together spreading the alcohol hand rub to all surfaces of the hands and fingers
- Rub hands together until they are dry

**CLEANSING HANDS IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS  
TO AVOID ILLNESSES**