

Hand hygiene



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

Good hand hygiene is one of the most important things that you and your family can do to stay healthy.

Why should I keep my hands and my child's hands clean?

- It can help prevent the spread of germs.
- Germs that cause the common cold, pinkeye, diarrhea and sometimes serious illnesses are often found on the hands.
- You and your child come in contact with germs every day when you use items, such as doorknobs, toys, books, cell phones and grocery carts.
- Germs can enter your child's body when unclean hands come in contact with the nose, mouth, eyes, or open cut or sore.
- Teach your family good hand hygiene. Insist that babysitters and child care workers do the same.

Five simple steps for washing your hands and your child's hands to help fight germs:

- **Wet** - use warm running water. Using warm water is a comfort measure, but it does not kill germs.
- **Lather** - use soap until you get lots of bubbles. You do not need to use anti-bacterial soap unless your child's doctor tells you to do so.
- **Wash** - rub hands together, washing the entire hand. Wash all of the fingers, both thumbs, between and under fingernails, back of hands, palms and wrists for at least 20 seconds. Singing one verse of "Happy Birthday to You" is about 20 seconds.
- **Rinse** - rinse hands well under running water. Rub your hands together while rinsing to remove all soap, dirt and germs.
- **Dry** - dry with a paper towel instead of rubbing with a cloth towel. In the hospital and public restrooms, use a dry paper towel to turn off the faucet.



In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Hand hygiene, continued

When should I clean my hands and my child's hands?

Before:

- Eating, drinking or feeding your child
- Treating a cut or scrape
- Handling your child's lines or tubes
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Giving medicines
- Entering your child's hospital room

After:

- Going to the bathroom
- Helping your child use the bathroom or changing diapers
- Handling uncooked food
- Touching garbage or anything that might have germs
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Wiping your child's nose
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Playing with or touching pets
- Coming from any kind of public place
- Leaving your child's hospital room

Is it OK to use alcohol-based gel or foam?

Alcohol-based gels and foams kill germs on your hands, but they do not remove dirt or grime. Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces until your hands are dry.

You may use alcohol-based gel or foam instead of washing with soap and water for all things listed above except:

- If you see dirt or grime on your hands.
- After handling uncooked meats.
- Before preparing or cooking food.
- After going to the bathroom.
- After helping your child use the bathroom or changing diapers.

Never use alcohol-based gel or foam **before** you:

- Touch your or your child's eyes or mouth.
- Put in or take out contact lenses.

Alcohol-based gel or foam



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