

Quick Steps for Handwashing

When done correctly, handwashing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

Handwashing can stop three of the main ways in which diseases spread between people:

- 1. Fecal-oral transmission.** This refers to diseases we get by ingesting fecal material (also called stool, excrement, poop, etc.), which happens more often than we'd like to imagine - usually because someone forgets to wash their hands after using the toilet and then touches food, drinks or other items. The germs are transferred to others who touch those items later.
- 2. Indirect contact with respiratory secretions.** Many diseases are spread indirectly by infected people who cough or sneeze into their hands, leaving respiratory discharges that can be picked up by other people when they touch or shake hands. Sneezers and coughers, wash your hands! The rest of us need to remember to wash our hands after touching anyone who has been coughing and sneezing.
- 3. Contact with body fluids.** Urine, saliva and other moist body substances can spread microbes. These germs can be transmitted from person to person or indirectly by contamination of food or objects.

How to Wash

- **Use warm water.**
- **Wet your hands before applying soap.**
- **Rub your soapy hands together for at least 20 seconds.**
- **Rinse your hands thoroughly to remove all soap.**
- **Turn off water with paper towel.**
- **Dry your hands with an air-dryer or a clean paper towel.**

It is estimated that more than one-third of Americans do not wash their hands after using the bathroom.

Please don't be one of them!

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, County Governments Cooperating