

# Hand Washing

Good hand washing can help your family avoid colds, flu, diarrhea and other infections. Follow these hand washing tips and teach them to your children.

## When to wash

### Wash hands well before:

- Preparing or eating food

### and after:

- Using the bathroom
- Cleaning the house
- Changing diapers
- Touching a pet or animal

- Playing outside
- Handling meat, fish or eggs
- Using tissue
- Sneezing or coughing
- Wiping a child's nose

Wash your hands even more often if you are ill.

## How to wash

Correct hand washing involves soap, water and rubbing. Follow these key steps:

1. Wash with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. Warm water kills germs best.



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2. Make sure you get the “in-between” places like between fingers, under the nails and the backs of hands and wrists.
3. Rinse well while rubbing hands together.
4. Dry hands well with a clean dry towel. Wet hands help bacteria grow.
5. Use a towel to turn off water.

### Teach your children to:

- Sneeze or cough into the inside of their arms instead of their hands to help prevent spreading germs.
- Keep fingernails clean.
- Avoid biting their nails.
- Keep hands and fingers out of their mouths and away from their eyes and nose.

### Other tips:

- Use colorful soap made for kids. Some come in fun scents or shapes that make washing hands fun.
- Have your child sing a favorite short song while soaping up. This helps to make sure they take enough time to wash well. Try the ABC song or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”
- Praise your child for remembering to wash or for doing a good job of washing.
- Buy alcohol-based hand sanitizer, like Purell, for washing hands when soap and water are not available. Keep a bottle in the car, one at school and bring one along during outings. It cleans hands well when they are not visibly dirty.

#### To Learn More

- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)
- **Seattle Children’s Resource Line**  
**206-987-2500 or 866-987-2500**  
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- **Your child’s healthcare provider**

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Seattle Children’s will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children’s. However, your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider.

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