

# Hand Hygiene

## Why is hand washing important?

- Hand washing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of illness.

## When should I wash my hands?

- When they are visibly dirty
- Before preparing and immediately after handling food
- After using the toilet or changing a diaper
- After contact with contaminated surfaces (e.g. garbage bins)
- After handling pets, animals, animal waste, pet food or treats
- After wiping or blowing your nose, or coughing or sneezing into your hand
- After contact with blood, bodily fluids or wounds
- Before and after giving care or visiting someone who is ill or less able to fight infections

## Five (5) simple steps to hand washing

- Wet your hands with warm running water and apply soap.
- Rub your hands vigorously for at least 15-20 seconds. Remember to wash the front and back of your hands, as well as in between fingers, around thumbs, and under fingernails and jewelry.
- Rinse hands well under warm running water.
- Pat hands dry with paper towel.
- Turn off water using a paper towel and discard.

## When can you use alcohol based hand rub?

- Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub that contains at least 70% alcohol.

## How do I use alcohol based hand rub?

- Ensure hands are visibly clean and dry.

- Apply enough hand rub into a cupped palm to completely wet both your hands.
- Rub your hands together to cover all areas of your hands, including under your nails.
- Use a rubbing motion to evenly distribute the product over ALL surfaces of your hands until your hands feel dry. This should take at least 15 seconds.

## Is it safe to use alcohol-based hand rub on the hands of children?

- Yes it is safe in children over the age of 24 months; however young children should be closely supervised when using it. After application of the hand rub to hands, the alcohol content evaporates.

## Take care of your hands

- Use a protective hand cream or lotion frequently to reduce irritation.
- Keep nails clean and short.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control Program staff at 705-474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808, ext 5229.

## Reference:

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