

Hand Washing 101

The Schoharie County Health Department wants you to know that keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infection and illness.

Hand washing is easy to do and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many types of infection and illness in all settings—from your [home](#) and [workplace](#) to child care facilities and [hospitals](#). Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community.

Learn more about when and how to wash your hands.

When should you wash your hands?

- **Before**, during, and after preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **Before** and after caring for someone who is sick
- **Before** and after treating a cut or wound
- **After** using the toilet
- **After** changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- **After** touching garbage

What is the right way to wash your hands?

- Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs.

Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty.

How should you use hand sanitizer?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

For more information on hand washing, please call the Schoharie County Department of Health @ 295-8365.