



# TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

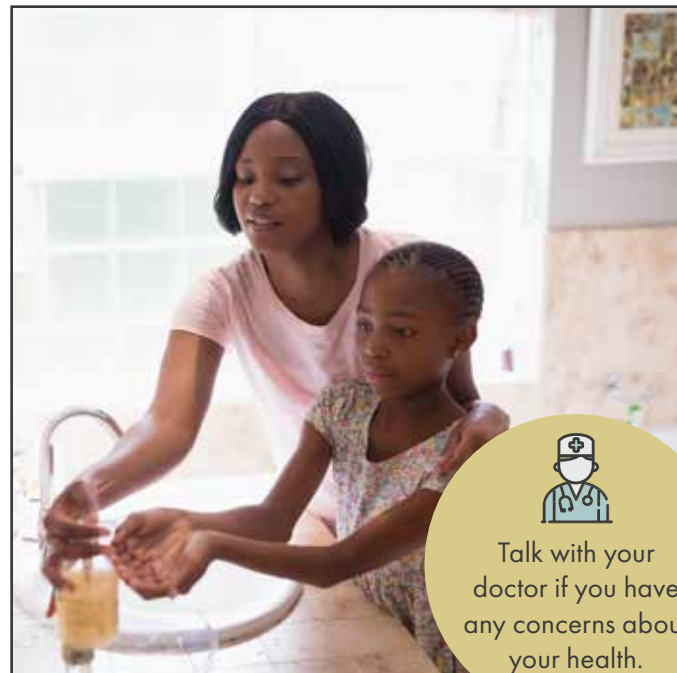
## Prevent the Spread of Infection

### PRACTICE GOOD HAND HYGIENE

Washing your hands is the key to keeping yourself and your loved ones healthy and to stop the spread of germs. So what details do we need to know?

Follow these five simple steps to wash your hands well and prevent spreading infection:

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Water can be warm or cold—studies don't show a difference in germ removal—but cold is better for the environment and for your skin. To conserve water, turn it off once you wet your hands!
2. **Lather** your hands with the soap by rubbing your hands together. Rub and scrub the tops and bottoms of your hands, your wrists, in between your fingers, and underneath your fingernails.
3. **Scrub** your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Singing or humming the “Happy Birthday” song twice is a perfect timer!
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water. Again, temperature is up to you!
5. **Dry** your hands well using a clean towel or letting them air dry. Germs are transferred more easily from wet hands.



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Running water is important because standing water can be contaminated and can recontaminate your hands. It can be used if you have no other option.

Some people believe a paper towel should be used to shut off the faucet after hand washing, but there is not much data that supports this. It increases water and paper towel use, however, and is not necessary to worry about.

The lathering and scrubbing of the entire hand really helps lift dirt, grease, and microbes from the skin. Soap aids in lifting those germs, and people wash more effectively when they use it.

#### WHY DO WE NEED TO WASH OUR HANDS?

- » Feces is a major source of spreading viruses, such as norovirus, E. coli, Salmonella, etc. When people do not wash their hands after using the restroom, this can be spread to objects or food very easily. These can also be

spread through animal feces by touching raw meat.

- » Germs on unwashed hands can be spread through food and drinks as people are preparing it and then eating it.
- » Germs can be spread to objects such as toys, tables, countertops, handrails, etc.
- » People touch their eyes, mouth, and nose often and as they pick up germs and don't wash their hands, they are transferring these germs through those mucous membranes.

### WHEN SHOULD WE BE WASHING?

*All the time! But, more specifically:*

- » After using the bathroom.
- » After helping a child use the bathroom or after changing a diaper.
- » After touching an animal or anything related to animals (feeding, waste, etc.)—this includes pets as well.
- » After touching or handling garbage.
- » After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- » Before eating.
- » Before AND after treating a cut or wound.
- » Before AND after caring for a loved one who is sick. Especially if they are vomiting or have diarrhea.
- » Before, during, AND after preparing food.

### WHAT ABOUT HAND SANITIZER?

Hand sanitizer may be used if soap and water are not available, but there are a few key details to remember:

- » Using soap and water is preferred if available.

- » Hand sanitizer must be alcohol-based with at least 60% alcohol to be effective.
- » It is not as effective if your hands are visibly soiled.
- » Pesticides and heavy metals are likely not removed from hand sanitizers.
- » Being alcohol-based means you can get alcohol poisoning! Specifically, our young children! So keep it out of reach, in a safe place.
- » Rub the hand sanitizer in all over the tops and bottoms of your hands, including between the fingers. Just like you would with soap and water!
- » And again, just like with soap and water, it is important for your hands to dry completely.

Don't forget about children. They need to wash their hands as often (or more often) as adults. Teach them how to properly wash with soap and water, and how to use hand sanitizer as well. It's also very important to teach them to cough and sneeze into a tissue or their sleeve, and then wash their hands immediately. Germs are so easily passed from children because they do not understand the precautions that are necessary.

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### ACCORDING TO THE CDC:

- » It is estimated that washing your hands reduces deaths related to diarrhea by up to 50%.
- » One million deaths could be prevented EACH YEAR if we all started washing our hands regularly.
- » Hand washing reduces the risk of respiratory infections by 16%.
- » In one study in schools totaling 6,000 students, the rate of absenteeism due to illness went down 19.8% after introducing alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the classroom.