

## **Fighting Germs – Hand Washing**

Germs are everywhere. The four different types of germs are bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. They are so small you can't see them with the naked eye. They are acquired mostly by touching infected surfaces and then your face (nose, mouth, eyes). Germs can cause a variety of things. They can cause a minor infection such as a common cold and there are also germs that can put your life in danger. The best line of defense against germs is to wash your hands. It sounds so simple. Proper hand-washing technique is key in preventing germs from making you ill. While hand sanitizers and hand sanitizing lotions have become popular, studies have proven that good hand-washing with soap and water is still more effective. Experts, including the Center for Disease Control, suggest the following method.

### **Proper Hand-washing Technique Steps –**

- Turn on faucet
- Wet your hands with water (preferably warm)
- Apply Soap
- Scrub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. (This is about the amount of time to sing the Happy Birthday song two times) Be sure to wash both sides of your hands and between your fingers
- Rinse your hands with water
- While leaving the faucet running dry your hands with a paper towel
- Use the paper towel to shut off the faucet (thereby preventing recontamination of germs to your hands)
- Use the paper towel to open the door to exit the restroom and then dispose of in the garbage

### **If unable to access a sink and water-**

- Use an antibacterial hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol and be sure to use enough to cover the fronts and backs of hands and in between your fingers
- Do not towel dry, allow hand sanitizer to air dry to be effective

Frequent hand-washing especially before and after certain activities is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs.

### **When to wash your hands-**

- **Always Before:**
  - Preparing food or eating
  - Touching your face
  - Inserting or removing contact lenses
  - Caring for an infant or a sick person

- **Always After:**
  - Preparing food
  - Using the bathroom
  - Blowing your nose
  - Coughing or sneezing into your hand
  - Changing a diaper or assisting in toileting
  - Touching an animal or animal waste disposal
  - Caring for a sick person
  - Shaking hands and being out in public places
  - Handling garbage
  - Gardening
  - Observing that your hands are visibly dirty

For further information on infection control and proper hand-washing:  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)