

“What’s the best way to prevent the spread of infection?”

Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands.



This simple task, which **takes 20 seconds**, can help prevent the flu, hepatitis A, diarrhea and colds. Each year in the United States, food borne illnesses cause **76 million people** to get diarrhea and an upset stomach, **325,000 people** to be hospitalized, and **5,000 people** to *die unnecessarily*. The vast majority of these illnesses can be prevented.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before eating food, during and after preparing food, and after touching raw meats, poultry and fish
- After handling dirty equipment, dishes and utensils
- After going to the bathroom, changing diapers or cleaning a child who has used the toilet
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick, before and after treating a cut or wound
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After smoking

How should you wash your hands?

- Wet your hands with warm, running water.
- Lather with soap and scrub the front and back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails. Wash for at least 20 seconds. (Hum “Happy Birthday” twice, or say the alphabet.)
- Rinse under warm water, then dry your hands with a clean towel, paper towel or electric hand dryer.
- Use a paper towel when you turn off the tap, and when you exit the bathroom, open the door with a paper towel.

Keeping your children’s hands clean

- Wash your hands with your children to show them how to do it.
- Teach them to wash while singing “Happy Birthday” twice.
- Put a stepstool nearby for little children who can’t reach the sink on their own.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are safe for children to use.
- Ask your child care provider if the children are encouraged to wash their hands often.

Information for this flyer is from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Mayo Clinic.

