



**Wash  
your  
hands**



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**Handwashing is the  
20-second solution  
to protecting yourself  
from many diseases.**

**So remember:**

**Use soap**

**Wash often**

**Wash long enough**



*clean*  
**Your health is in your hands**



For more information about  
handwashing, please call the  
Massachusetts Department of  
Public Health, Division of  
Epidemiology and Immunization  
at 617.983.6800 or visit the MDPH website at  
[www.mass.gov/handwashing](http://www.mass.gov/handwashing)

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**What's the  
simplest way  
to protect  
yourself from**

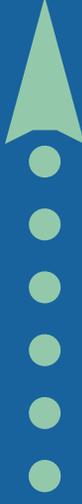
**colds?**

**flu?**

**diarrhea?**

**hepatitis A?**

**SARS?**



# Why

Many outbreaks of foodborne illness are traced to unwashed or poorly washed hands.

Sneezing and coughing can spread cold germs into the air, but most colds are caught and spread through germs on people's hands.

The germs that cause the flu, SARS, hepatitis A and many kinds of diarrhea can also be picked up and spread by your hands.

If these germs are on your hands, touching your mouth or nose to eat, sneeze or cough can make you sick.

Touching a doorknob, pressing an elevator button, grabbing a pole on public transit or shaking hands can spread germs to others.



Imagine looking at your unwashed hands under a microscope. What would you see growing there?

# When

**Always wash your hands**

**Before you**

- touch or serve food
- eat or drink
- put in or take out contact lenses
- treat a cut, scrape, burn or blister
- take care of someone who is sick

**After you**

- go to the bathroom
- help someone else use the bathroom
- change a diaper (don't forget to wash the baby's hands too!)
- cough, sneeze, blow your nose or wipe a child's nose
- handle uncooked food, especially raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs
- handle garbage
- touch an animal—especially a reptile—or clean up animal waste
- take care of someone who is sick or injured
- use public transportation

# How

Washing our hands is a lesson we all learned as children, but when we're busy or in a hurry, we tend to rush or forget to do it. We think our hands are clean, but they're not if we haven't done it right.

Just rinsing your hands isn't washing them, it's wetting them. To get them clean you need to use soap.

A quick rub, even with soap, won't get your hands clean, and the few seconds you save could cost you days if you get sick later.

To make sure your hands are really clean, scrub your palms, between your fingers, the backs of your hands and under your fingernails for at least 20 seconds.

After rinsing, dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the same paper towel to turn off the water and open the restroom door.

**Use regular soap. Antibacterial soap isn't necessary.** These soaps do kill bacteria, but antibacterial soaps may contribute to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance.

*clean*  
**Your health is in your hands**



Wet hands



Apply soap & rub for 20 seconds



Rinse



Dry with paper towel



Use towel to turn off faucet