

# FactSheet

Para Su Información

## Hand Washing

### Why is hand washing important?

Proper hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

### Is there a right way to wash your hands?

There is more to hand washing than you think!

- Rub your hands together vigorously with warm, soapy water to remove dirt, oils and germs from the skin.
- The soapy lather traps the dirt, oil, and germs, making them easier to wash away.

Follow these five simple steps:

- 1) Turn on the faucet to start the warm running water. Wet your hands.
- 2) Apply soap and lather well, scrubbing between fingers, wrists, backs of hands and under nails for at least 20 seconds.
- 3) Rinse with warm water running from your wrist down to your fingertips, then into the sink.
- 4) With the water still running, dry your hands well. Disposable towels or air hand dryers are required in public restrooms.
- 5) Using the disposable towel, turn off the sink faucet and then dispose. Keep washed hands covered to prevent recontamination.

Once you have properly washed your hands, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used. Use hand lotion if dry skin becomes a problem.

### What type of soap should I use?

Liquid soap is required at all public hand washing areas, however, bar soap may be used in your home. A self-draining holder that is cleaned frequently is recommended for bar soap.

When family members are sick, use liquid soap and disposable towels. Avoid bar soap and shared cloth towels as they may spread germs.

### What should we teach children about hand washing?

It is important to teach children how to wash their hands using the same steps listed above. Teach them to sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or the “Happy Birthday” song while washing their hands to ensure they wash them for the proper length of time.

Adults and children should wash their hands:

- After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms
- Before and after eating
- After playing outdoors
- After playing with pets
- After using the bathroom
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing their noses
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils
- After food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination and to prevent cross-contamination when changing tasks
- After switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food.
- After using tobacco
- After engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands

Even though hands may appear to be clean, they may carry germs that cause disease.

Don't assume that children know how to wash their hands properly. Supervision, especially in a childcare

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setting, is essential to forming good hand washing habits in children.

Finally, children learn by example. Let them see good hand washing habits from adults who care for them.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Call the Southern Nevada Health District Environmental Health Division at (702) 759-0588 or the Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



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