NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL℠

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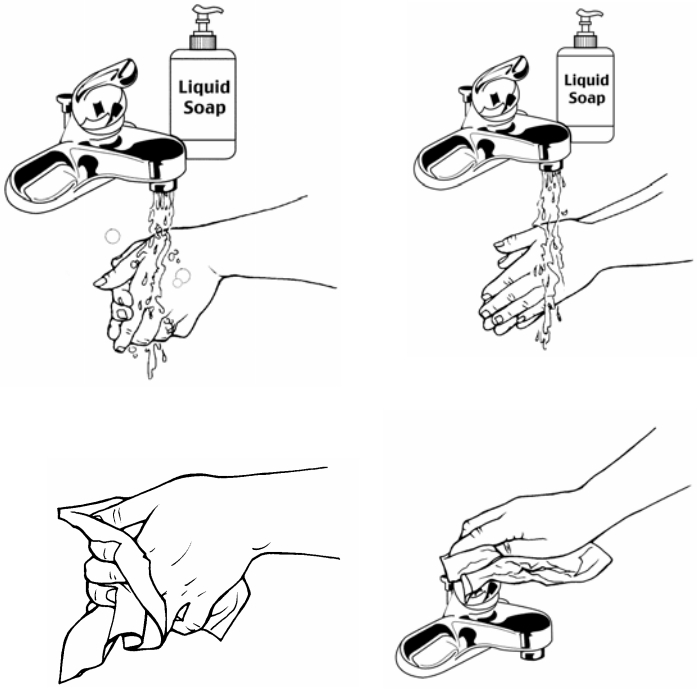
HAND HYGIENE

The best way to prevent the spread of germs (bacteria and viruses) and prevent infections is to remove or kill harmful bacteria and viruses by a process called "hand hygiene." Proper hand hygiene involves either washing hands with soap and water or decontaminating (killing germs on the hands) with an alcohol-based hand rub. When you clean your hands, you remove many germs. Germs are very small; you can't see them but they spread disease. Germs are everywhere. For example, they are on door handles, tables, phones, pencils, etc. Our hands constantly come into contact with them. That's why having clean hands will help keep you healthy.

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

1. Wet your hands with warm, running water.
2. Apply soap.
3. Rub your hands together well for at least 15 seconds, making sure to clean between your fingers, under your nails, and on the back of your hands. You should be able to count to 15 slowly before you are finished rubbing your hands. If children are old enough, teach them to sing the ABC song while washing.
4. Rinse your hands well under the running water. This is because soap left on your hands may cause dry, chapped skin.
5. Dry your hands with a paper towel or clean washcloth.
6. Use the towel or washcloth to turn off the water. If you touch the water faucet after you wash your hands, you may get germs on your hands again.



It is important to use running water when washing your hands. Running water is an important part of washing away germs. Special Towelettes or hand wipes should only be used when running water is not nearby. Water basins should not be used instead of running water. Outbreaks of illnesses have been linked with sharing wash water and wash basins or sinks.

WHAT KIND OF SOAP TO USE WHEN WASHING HANDS

- Liquid soap works better than bar soap but using bar soap is fine.
- Anti-bacterial soap kills more germs than regular soap, but regular soap is okay most of the time.
- Use mild soaps to prevent chapped or dry hands.
- If your hands become dry, use hand lotion after washing your hands. If using lotions, use liquids or tubes that can be squirted so that your hands do not have to touch the spout of the container.

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HOW TO USE THE WATERLESS ALCOHOL-BASED HAND RUB:

- Apply the rub to palm of hand.
- Rub hands together covering all surfaces of hands and fingers.
- Rub until hands are dry.

WHEN TO PERFORM HAND HYGIENE

Wash Hands with Soap and Water	Wash Hands with Soap and Water or Use a Waterless Alcohol-Based Hand Rub
▪ Before eating ▪ After using the bathroom ▪ After blowing or wiping your nose ▪ After coughing or sneezing into a tissue ▪ Any time your hands are dirty ▪ After changing diapers or helping a child use the potty ▪ After contact with body fluids like blood, urine or vomit	▪ When you get to school ▪ When you arrive home from school ▪ After petting animals ▪ After being in contact with a sick person

FINGERNAILS

Artificial nails* can hide dangerous bacteria and should be avoided, especially if you are doing dressing changes or caring for a child who has lowered immunity, a central IV line, or a feeding tube. It's best to use clear polish on natural nails or leave them unpolished.

* Includes bonding, tips, wrappings, tapes, inlays and overlays

OTHER HELPING HANDS

For more information on cleanliness and hygiene, ask your nurse for these Helping Hands:
Dental: *Teeth and Gum Care*, HH-IV-4, *Personal Hygiene*, HH-IV-58, *Bathing Your Baby,* HH-IV-2, and *Lice: Treatment and Prevention,* HH-I-49.