Handwashing: Clean hands save lives

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash your hands with soap and clean, running water for 20 seconds. However, if soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting.

**When should you wash your hands?**
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After touching garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

**When washing hands with soap and water:**
- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

**When using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:**
- Apply product to the palm of one hand
- Rub hands together
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry

*This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your health care provider’s instructions.*

Reference: [https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/)