

Wellness Articles

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Hand Hygiene: stay healthy indoors and out

Back-to-school season and cooler weather brings many Albertans back indoors and with more communal activity, there is also often an increase in the spread of common viruses and infections.

Cleaning our hands (also known as hand hygiene) is one of the best ways we can prevent germs from spreading.

The main way germs spread is through our hands. We can pick up germs almost everywhere, including telephones, doorknobs, and stair railings. We can spread these germs without even realizing it.

Our hands may look clean, but we can't see the germs that cause infections. When we forget to clean our hands, or don't clean them properly, we can spread germs to other people. We can also spread them to ourselves by touching our eyes, mouth, nose, or cuts on our bodies.

We can all do our part to prevent germs from spreading and causing infections by taking a few simple steps to keep our hands clean.

When Do We Need to Clean Our Hands?

- Before preparing and eating food.
- Before touching our eyes, nose, or mouth.
- After using the bathroom, blowing our nose, or coughing or sneezing on our hands.

How Do We Clean Our Hands: Hand Sanitizer or Soap and Water?

You can use hand sanitizers (alcohol-based hand rub) or soap and water to clean your hands.

Hand sanitizers are best to use when your hands don't look or feel dirty but should be cleaned.

To clean your hands with hand sanitizer:

1. make sure your hands are dry
2. put enough hand sanitizer on your hand to cover your palm



3. rub it all over your hands (e.g., on your wrists, palms, backs of your hands, and between your fingers)
4. keep rubbing until all the hand sanitizer dries (about 15 seconds)

Soap and water is best to use when your hands look or feel dirty, before eating or preparing food and after using the bathroom.

To clean your hands with soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with running water and apply soap.
2. Rub your hands together to make a lather. Scrub well for at least 20 seconds.
3. Pay special attention to your wrists, the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Use a clean towel to dry your hands, or air-dry your hands.

In addition to keeping up your hand hygiene, be sure to arm yourself against influenza, by getting immunized. Alberta's Influenza Immunization Program begins Oct. 24th - plan ahead now to get your immunization as early in the season as possible. www.ahs.ca/influenza