

---

---

# HAND WASHING BASICS

---

---

Sometimes it can be difficult to find running water. However, it is still important to wash your hands frequently to avoid illness. Soap combined with the scrubbing action helps dislodge and remove germs. It is not necessary to use a special antimicrobial soap - regular bar or liquid soap is sufficient. In addition, there is concern that antimicrobial soap may eventually contribute to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance. It's always best to wash your hands with soap and warm water, but when water isn't available you can use waterless alcohol-based products for washing your hands.



## When should you wash your hands?

- ✧ Before and after treating a cut, burn or wound
- ✧ When tending to someone who is sick
- ✧ After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- ✧ After going to the bathroom
- ✧ After changing a soiled/wet diaper or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- ✧ After being in crowded areas
- ✧ Before preparing or eating food
- ✧ Before you touch your eyes, nose or mouth
- ✧ After handling uncooked foods, particularly raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish
- ✧ After handling an animal (especially a reptile) or animal waste
- ✧ After handling garbage

## If You Are Washing Your Hands with Alcohol-Based Products

Alcohol-based (gel, foam or towelettes) hand sanitizers don't need water to work. Apply the product to the palm of one hand and rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds. Cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers (pay special attention to the areas most commonly missed, such as the fingertips and nails, creases of the palms and outer edges of the hands) until hands are dry. Hand sanitizers significantly reduce the number of germs on skin, are fast acting and usually cause little skin irritation. While the alcohol does kill germs, alcohol-based products do not remove dirt. "Dirty hands" must still be washed with soap and water as soon as possible. Be careful that children don't breathe in the vapors from the alcohol based hand sanitizers, especially if they have asthma.

## If You Are Washing Your Hands with Soap and Water

- ① Place your hands together under water (warm water if possible).
- ② Add soap and rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, knuckles and fingers.
- ③ Make sure to clean any dirt or other material from your cuticles and under your fingernails.
- ④ Rinse the soap from your hands.
- ⑤ Dry your hands with a clean paper towel. If a clean towel isn't available, air dry your hands. Pat your skin rather than rubbing to avoid chapping and cracking.
- ⑥ Turn off the faucet using the paper towel to avoid re-contaminating your hands. Throw the towel in the trash to avoid any contamination.



**Middletown Township Health Department**