

Prevent the spread of cold and flu with regular hand washing

In the mid 19th Century Ignaz Semmelweis and Florence Nightingale pioneered hand washing as prevention against the spread of infection. This simple practice revolutionised health care and public health. It is still as important today as it was then.

Hand washing is the most effective means of preventing the spread of infection, including winter colds, and flu.

Hand washing needs to be done before:

- eating or preparing food

and after:

- sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose or a child's.
- gardening or playing outside
- contact with animals
- going to the toilet or changing nappies
- looking after sick people

Hand washing is not just putting a little soap on your hands and running them under the tap. It requires soap that froths, cleaning all the surfaces of the hands for at least 20 seconds.

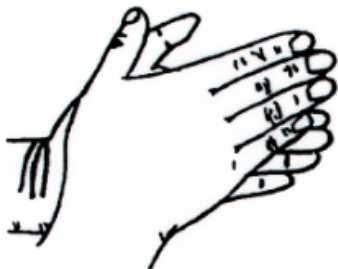
The following **7 steps** for good hand washing are:

Step 1: Turn on taps; adjust water temperature to desired heat.

Step 2: Wet hands under running water.

Step 3: Apply soap to palm of hand (use a soap that froths up well)

Step 4: Ensure contact of soap with all surfaces for at least 20 seconds, refer to the following



a) palm to palm



b) Right palm over left back of hand and vice versa



c) Palm to palm fingers interlaced.



d) Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



e) Rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm and vice versa



f) Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.

Step 5: Rinse hands thoroughly for about 20 seconds, as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday through twice.

Step 6: Dry hands thoroughly with clean towel or paper towel.

Step 7: Where possible turn taps off with elbows or paper towel (avoid hand contact with taps and door handles).

NB Any broken skin areas should be covered with a dressing.

Hand washing technique
(Aycliffe et al, 1978, Lawrence 1985)