

PANDEMIC PLANNING

Personal Hygiene

This fact sheet provides information on how to use good personal hygiene practices as a means to help control or minimize the spread of a possible pandemic virus among individuals and in the community.

BACKGROUND

A severe pandemic is defined as a worldwide epidemic in a vulnerable population. Communities, individuals, employers, schools, and other organizations are asked to prepare and plan for the use of interventions that will help limit the spread of disease. Pandemic concerns have increased due to more recent disease outbreaks such as the SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) in 2002, pandemic H1N1 in 2009, MERS coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in 2012, and novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in 2019. Future disease outbreaks are likely, but difficult to predict.

Personal Hygiene Basics

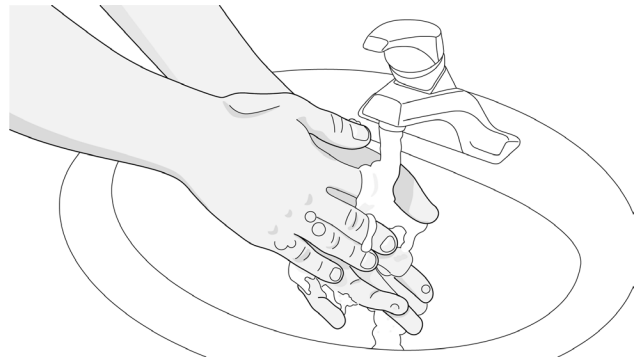
The best way to stop the spread of germs causing the flu or other illness is to encourage voluntary isolation by staying home when ill. Infected individuals should control discharges from coughing and sneezing by wearing face masks and practicing social distancing (6 feet or 2 meters). Healthy individuals should wash their hands often and avoid contact with infected people. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Handwashing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection." Hands should be washed with clean water and soap:

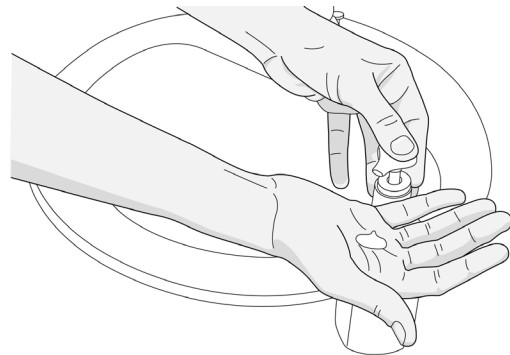
- When they are dirty.
- After using the restroom.
- Before and after preparing meals.
- After cutting and handling uncooked meat.
- Before eating.
- After cleaning the house.
- After caring for someone who is ill.
- After changing an infant's diaper.
- After cleaning up blood or body fluids.
- After handling soiled bed linens and clothes.
- Before and after flossing teeth.
- After coughing or sneezing into hands.

How to Wash Hands

1. Adjust water to a comfortable level, and wet hands.



2. Dispense a small amount of soap into the palm of the hand. Rub to create lather.



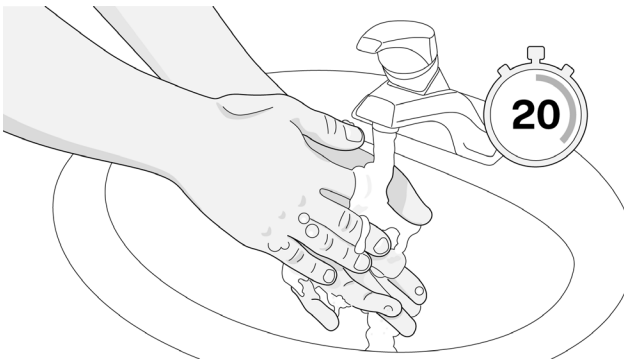
3. Using as much friction as needed, thoroughly clean all surfaces of hands, including between the fingers, back of the hand, and thumb.



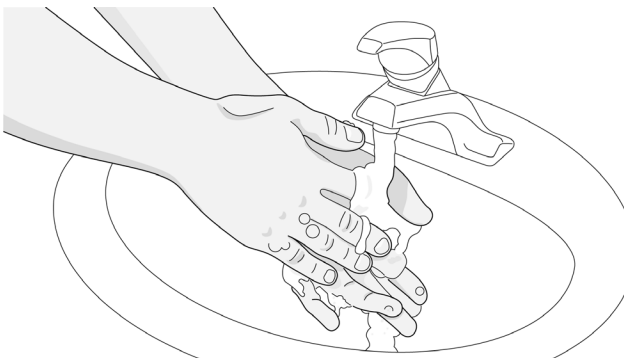
4. Clean the nails and nail beds by rubbing the nails of one hand across the palm of the other. Create enough friction to clean underneath the nails.



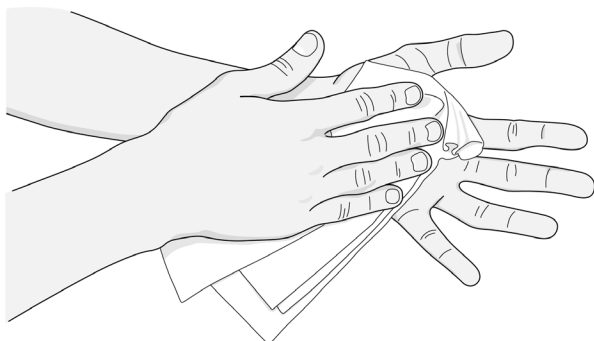
5. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds. Sing a song like the birthday song (twice) or recite a familiar poem to help wash for 20 seconds.



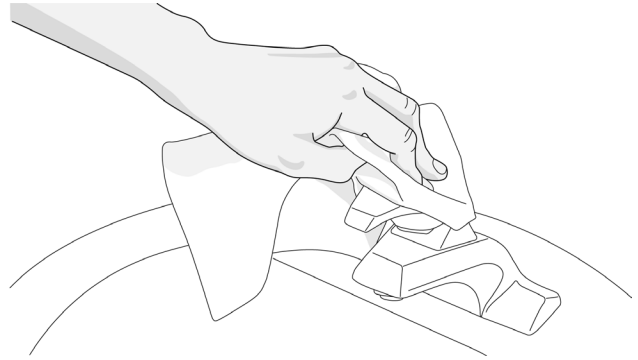
6. Rinse the hands under running water, holding hands in a downward position.



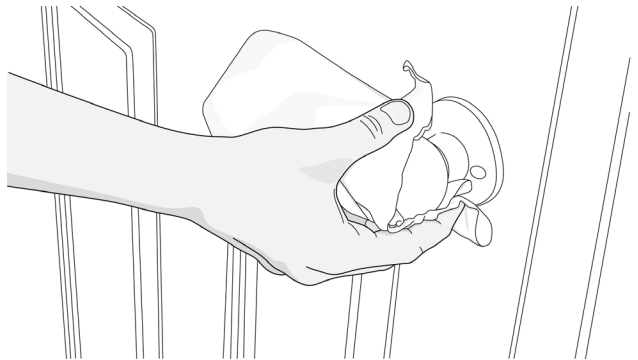
7. Use paper towels to thoroughly dry hands.



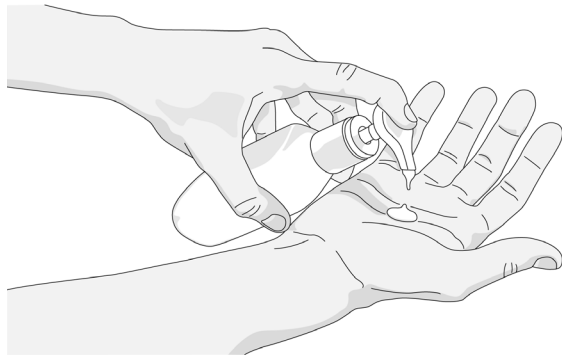
8. Use the same paper towel from drying hands to turn off the water supply.



9. Use it again to open the door.



Other Hand Cleaning Options



Alcohol-based hand cleaners can also be used to clean hands. Put a small amount on the hands, and rub all hand surfaces until the hands are dry.

If commercially prepared alcohol-based hand cleaners are not available or are too costly, an alcohol-based hand cleaner can be made by mixing 70% alcohol and glycerin (about 2% by volume of glycerin). The glycerin keeps the hands soft, as the alcohol can dry them out. Hands will periodically need to be washed with soap and water because the hands will have a glycerin buildup over time.

Cough Etiquette

Use the following measures to contain large droplets from coughs and sneezes:



- Cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Provide and encourage use of tissues to contain respiratory secretions. If possible, dispose of tissues immediately in the nearest no-touch waste receptacle after use.
- If tissues are unavailable, cough or sneeze into a handkerchief or into your arm or shoulder, not your hands.
- If you cough or sneeze into your hands, be sure to wash or clean them with an alcohol-based hand cleaner as soon as possible to stop the spread of germs.

REFERENCES

Perkins, John J., M.S., LLD, FRSH. *Principles and Methods of Sterilization in Health Sciences*. 2nd ed. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1996.

World Health Organization. *Practical Guidelines for Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities*. Regional Office for Western Pacific Region, Manila: WHO, 2004.

"Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette in Healthcare Settings." CDC. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm>

Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic. OSHA 3327-05R 2009. <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3327pandemic.pdf>

For more information about this topic, call the Risk Management Division:

- 1-801-240-4049
- 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-4049 (toll free in the United States and Canada)

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