

Hand hygiene (washing)

Keeping hands clean is the best way to stop germs from spreading. Germs can be spread by hand contact. Even though hands, objects or surfaces look clean, thousands of germs may remain. It is possible to bring germs into the hospital or take them home with you. Some germs can live on surfaces for hours or even days. Most germs are harmless, but some cause illness or make an illness worse.

You should expect all health care staff to wash or sanitize their hands prior to and after providing any care. Do not hesitate to remind anyone who provides care to wash or sanitize their hands appropriately.

What can you do?

Visitors, family members and hospital staff should wash their hands at least upon entering and leaving a patient room. One of the most important things visitors can do to help keep our patients safe is to regularly wash their hands, as well.

Finally, helping patients wash their hands regularly is another way to help keep our environment safe. Patients need to wash their hands at least after using the restroom, before and after eating, and when their hands are soiled.

There are two ways to clean your hands:

Hand sanitizer

- All patient rooms have hand sanitizer dispensers immediately outside or inside the room.
- Foam sanitizer only needs to be the amount of the size of a quarter to clean hands well.
- Rub into all areas of the hands and fingers and especially around jewelry to clean thoroughly.

Washing your hands

- Wet your hands with warm water (too hot or too cold may cause chapping).
- Apply a small amount of soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to lather and scrub all surfaces for at least 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice).
- Rinse hands well under running warm water.
- Turn the faucet off with the paper towel (if available).
- Dry hands well using a paper towel or air dryer.



Most frequently missed spots on the hands:

- Fingertips
- Underneath the fingernails
- Between the fingers
- Between the thumb and finger