Handwashing is the 20-second solution to protecting yourself from many diseases.

So remember:
- Use soap
- Wash often
- Wash long enough

Your health is in your hands

Learn To Live
Healthy Living From The Anne Arundel County Department Of Health
410-222-7979
www.aahealth.org

What's the simplest way to protect yourself from:
- colds?
- flu?
- diarrhea?
- SARS?
**Why**

Many outbreaks of foodborne illness are traced to unwashed or poorly washed hands.

Sneezing and coughing can spread cold germs into the air, but most colds are caught and spread through germs on people’s hands.

The germs that cause the flu, SARS, hepatitis A and many kinds of diarrhea can also be picked up and spread by your hands.

If these germs are on your hands, touching your mouth or nose to eat, sneeze or cough can make you sick.

Touching a doorknob, pressing an elevator button, grabbing a pole on public transit or shaking hands can spread germs to others.

**Imagine looking at your unwashed hands under a microscope. What would you see growing there?**

**When**

Always wash your hands

**Before you**
- touch or serve food
- eat or drink
- put in or take out contact lenses
- treat a cut, scrape, burn or blister
- take care of someone who is sick

**After you**
- go to the bathroom
- help someone else use the bathroom
- change a diaper (don’t forget to wash the baby’s hands too!)
- cough, sneeze, blow your nose or wipe a child’s nose
- handle uncooked food, especially raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs
- handle garbage
- touch an animal—especially a reptile—or clean up animal waste
- take care of someone who is sick or injured
- use public transportation
- fish or crab

**How**

Washing our hands is a lesson we all learned as children, but when we’re busy or in a hurry, we tend to rush or forget to do it. We think our hands are clean, but they’re not if we haven’t done it right.

Just rinsing your hands isn’t washing them. It’s wetting them. To get them clean you need to use soap.

A quick rub, even with soap, won’t get your hands clean, and the few seconds you save could cost you days if you get sick later.

To make sure your hands are really clean, scrub your palms, between your fingers, the backs of your hands and under your fingernails for at least 20 seconds.

After rinsing, dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the same paper towel to turn off the water and open the restroom door.

When using alcohol-based sanitizers, you have used enough (about 1/2 tsp.) if it takes 25-30 seconds to dry on your hands.

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