

# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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## Handwashing - Basics to Better Health



**H**andwashing - The simple friction that occurs when you rub skin against skin, along with warm water and soap, followed by thorough rinsing, and drying, gets rid of the potentially harmful bacteria.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 36,000 people die from the flu or flu-like illness each year, and another 5,000 people die from food borne illness each year. And your best protection from this type of illness is frequent hand washing.

According to the CDC, the simple act of hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of vital and bacterial infections. Yet some findings reveal that about many Americans using public restrooms don't wash their hands before leaving. People also forget to wash their hands before preparing meals.

They grab snacks without thinking of hand washing.

### How Are Germs Spread?

Each day your hands are exposed to many contaminated surfaces. Then, when you unknowingly touch your face, the germs enter your body through your eyes, nose, and mouth. You can also transmit those germs to others by shaking hands (direct transmission) or handling items that others then touch (indirect transmission).

For germs to spread from one person to another, three things must happen:

1. Germs must be present. A person carries the germs; the germs are in the air or on a surface; or in body fluids such as mucus from the person's nose, a discharge from the eye, or saliva from the mouth.

2. A person who is not immune to the germs comes in contact with them. This happens when you touch a computer key board or mouse after someone with a cold or other illness has used it. It can happen when you use a telephone after someone who is sick touched it, when you kiss an ill person, or when you're in the path of someone's sneeze or cough (and that's hard to prevent!).

3. This point of contact happens in a way that leads to infection. In other words, as you touch your face, your mouth, your nose, or rub your eyes with unwashed hands, the germs enter your body.

(Over)



## Handwashing (Continued)

### How Should I Wash My Hands?

Many of us get so busy, we simply forget to wash our hands properly. Here's the rundown:

- First, wet your hands with water. Then apply soap. CDC guidelines advise using a plain, non-antimicrobial soap (this means it does not contain an antiseptic ingredient).
- Now, rub your hands together vigorously for 15-30 seconds. Make sure to rub the wrists, between the fingers, and under the fingernails. When you have time, use a nailbrush, as bacteria often hide under nails.
- Rinse your hands thoroughly and dry with a clean towel.
- If you are in a public restroom, shut the faucet off with a paper towel. Try to push the door open with your shoulder, or use another paper towel to turn the knob.

Sources: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).



## When to Wash Your Hands

### Washing hands:

- Often, especially during cold and flu (influenza) season, can reduce your risk of catching or spreading a cold or the flu.
- Before and after preparing or serving food reduces your risk of catching or spreading bacteria that cause food poisoning. Be especially careful to wash before and after preparing poultry, raw eggs, meat, or seafood.

### Wash your hands after:

- Touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean exposed parts of your arms.
- Using the bathroom.
- Coughing, sneezing, or using a handkerchief or disposable tissue.
- Eating, drinking, or using tobacco (for example, smoking).
- Handling or preparing foods, especially after touching raw meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, or eggs.
- Changing diapers, handling garbage, using the phone, shaking hands, or playing with pets

## Benefits Corner

### EOB (Explanation of Benefits) Reminder

Please remember to carefully review your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) to ensure that the correct amount has been applied to your deductible, co-pays and/or out of pocket maximums for your claim(s). For a copy of your Benefits Summary which contains the deductible, co-pays and out of pocket maximums for the PPO Plan that you are currently enrolled in, please go to [www.ctsi.org](http://www.ctsi.org). If you have any questions regarding your EOB, please contact Anthem customer service at the number on the back of your ID card, which is 1-888-698-0087 or your County Health Pool Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507.