

58% of female and 48% of male middle and high school students washed their hands after using the bathroom.

Hand Hygiene

For a Healthy School Year

Nearly 22 million school days are lost annually due to the common cold.

Proper hand hygiene is one of the most important steps in avoiding getting sick and spreading germs to others.

Hand washing is especially important in schools to keep students and staff healthy. Respiratory infections, influenza, and stomach viruses/diarrheal disease are three of the top reasons why students miss school. Proper hand washing with soap and clean, running water can help prevent all three of these illnesses.

Furthermore, school-based hand washing programs are associated with fewer student absences. In addition, children who have been taught hand washing at school bring that knowledge home to parents and siblings and this can help family members get sick less often and miss less work and school.

E. Coli, salmonella and other bacteria can live on surfaces like cafeteria tables and door knobs for up to two hours. The only way to remove these bacteria is with proper hand washing.



Hand Washing vs. Hand Sanitizers



While hand sanitizer may be quick, it is a poor substitution for hand washing.

- Hand sanitizers do not work equally well for all types of germs, including some highly infectious diarrheal diseases that are responsible for high student absences, like norovirus.
- Hand sanitizers *reduce* germs but do not *remove* them. Soap and water are more effective than hand sanitizers at removing and inactivating certain kinds of germs like norovirus.
- Hand sanitizers do not create the same friction that scrubbing and drying do, and therefore are less effective at removing dirt and grease.



STEP

1

Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.

Why: Using soap is more effective than using water alone because soap lifts soil and microbes from skin, and people scrub hands more thoroughly when using soap, which further removes germs.

STEP

2

Lather. Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub well.

Why: Lathering and scrubbing hands creates friction, which helps lift dirt, grease and microbes. The optimal amount of time to scrub is between 15-30 seconds, about two rounds of “Happy Birthday.”

STEP

3

Rinse your hands with clean, running water.

Why: By applying soap and scrubbing, you’ve created friction which lifts dirt, grease and microbes. Rinsing under clean, running water then rinses the dirt, grease and microbes off of the skin.

STEP

4

Dry your hands with a clean paper towel.

Why: Wet hands can easily transfer germs, making it important to dry hands after washing.

When Should You Wash Your Hands

- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After touching garbage

