

THE BIG GUIDE TO HAND WASHING

Why hand washing is so
important

Microorganisms - The
world in your hands

Hand washing for the
whole family

THE WORLD OF HAND WASHING

FOREWORD

Our hands are our constant companions in everyday life - they touch, grasp and hold everything that surrounds us. Sometimes they even hold more than we would like. Our palms and fingertips provide a home for the smallest creatures. A world that remains hidden from our eyes. We are talking about countless germs, bacteria and viruses that accumulate on our hands during the course of the day. These microbes pose a potential threat to the spread of disease.

In our guidebook, we embark on a journey into this invisible world of microorganisms that populate our hands from the tips of our fingers to the heels of our hands. We address the questions: "Why is hand washing so important?", "Which microorganisms settle on our hands during the course of the day?", "How do we most effectively prevent them from making us sick?" and "What's the deal with singing Happy Birthday twice while washing your hands?"

This guidebook will help you develop a conscious hand hygiene routine that not only protects your own health, but also makes an important contribution to preventing disease in society.

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WHY IS HAND WASHING SO IMPORTANT?

Our hands are exposed to countless challenges every day. They act as a bridge between our environment and our body. But this connection is not always harmless - on the contrary, it can be a gateway for pathogens.

The spread of pathogens

Our hands give. And they pass on. They are active mediators of microorganisms, including bacteria and viruses that can cause disease. Throughout the day, we come into contact with countless surfaces and people. Door handles, money, keyboards, food and many other items are potential carriers of germs. By getting these germs on our hands, we unwittingly contribute to the spread of disease.

Protection against infections and diseases

Another critical reason for hand washing is to protect against infection and disease. Pathogens colonize our hands and can infect us when we touch our nose, mouth or eyes. Washing hands effectively helps remove these pathogens, reducing the risk of infectious diseases such as colds

flu or gastrointestinal infections significantly. The risk of infection is particularly high in community environments. Hand hygiene plays a key role here.

Hand washing as a preventive measure

Hand washing not only helps prevent the spread of an already existing infection. It is also a preventive measure. It helps wash away pathogens before they enter our bodies. This is of particular importance for people with weakened immune systems, such as children, older adults, or those with chronic illnesses. Regular hand hygiene maintenance helps prevent serious health problems.



THE MICROBE GREETSS US DAILY



Day after day, our hands are exposed to countless objects, surfaces and people. Yet they are by no means immune to the invisible world of microorganisms. We take a closer look at our everyday encounters with germs and examine how these tiny organisms accumulate on our hands.

The invisible world of microorganisms

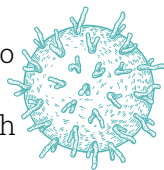
The world of microorganisms is invisible to the human eye. Bacteria, viruses and other germs live in it. Hidden from our view, it is nevertheless omnipresent and plays an important role in our lives. Microorganisms are found on surfaces, in the air and are present everywhere in our environment. Some of them are harmless or even beneficial, while others are infectious and make us sick. Our hands are like a collection point for these microorganisms.

When we touch a contaminated surface and then touch our face, nose or mouth, we open a door for germs to enter our bodies. Contact with infected people or keeping pets can also contribute to the colonization of germs on our hands.

Even though our palms can sometimes be a teeming mess, as long as we take effective hand hygiene measures, germs don't necessarily lead to illness.

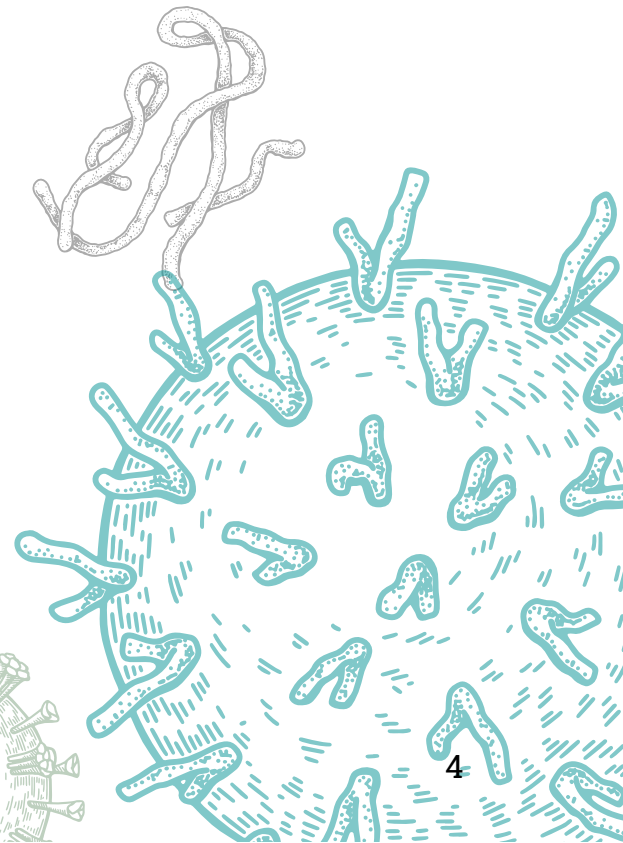
Everyday objects and places that can be contaminated with germs.

The list of places and objects that can be contaminated with germs is almost endless. From door handles on public transportation to bills to shopping carts and toilet seats. Incessantly, our hands come into contact with potentially contaminated surfaces. Even our smartphones and computer keyboards, which we touch constantly, are often carriers of germs.



How pathogens accumulate on our hands

The accumulation of pathogens on our hands often happens unnoticed.



BACTERIA, VIRUSES & CO.

Our hands write diversity in capital letters. They are the playground of a wide variety of microorganisms. Sometimes they include pathogens that can cause serious health problems. But what types of germs adhere to our hands and how do they endanger our health?

What really sticks to our hands?

Typical germs found on our hands

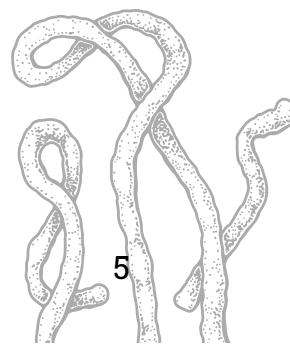
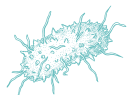
Our hands are veritable microorganism collection points. The range of germs that live on them is wide. In addition to harmless bacteria that are part of the natural skin flora and have protective functions, pathogens such as pathogenic bacteria and viruses can also be found here. Examples are the influenza virus, which causes the flu, or the norovirus, which causes gastrointestinal diseases.

Specific pathogens and their modes of transmission

Pathogens that can be easily transmitted from person to person are particularly dangerous. These include, for example, staphylococci, which can cause skin and respiratory infections, or the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which triggered the COVID-19 pandemic. Transmission of these pathogens often occurs through droplet infections or direct contact. In the latter, our hands serve as vehicles for spread and therefore play a crucial role.

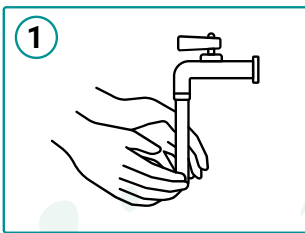
The danger of antibiotic resistance

Another important aspect related to germs on the hands is the emergence of antibiotic resistance. Due to the overuse of antibiotics, some strains of bacteria have developed resistance to these vital drugs. If these resistant germs occur on our hands or in our environment, they become a serious threat to health as conventional treatments become less effective.

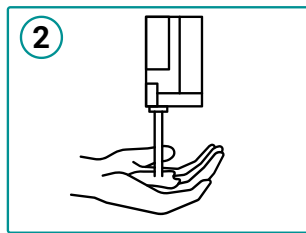


THE RIGHT WASHING TECHNIQUE

At first glance, hand washing seems like an everyday act: a little water, a little soap, rinse, dry, done! To effectively remove germs, bacteria and viruses from our hands, the right washing technique plays a crucial role.



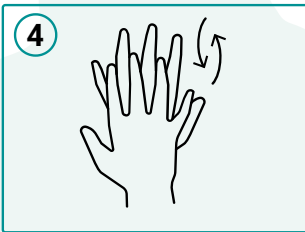
1
Moisten your hands with water



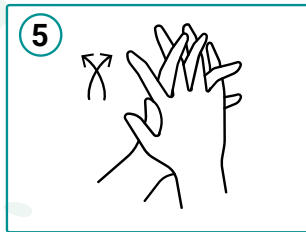
2
Put a sufficient amount of soap in the palm of your hand



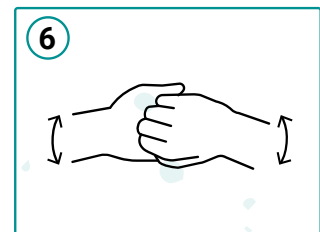
3
Rub your palms against each other



4
Place the palm of the hand on the back of the hand, clean the spaces between the fingers, change sides



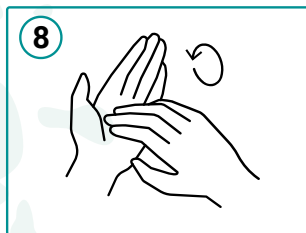
5
Place the palms on top of each other and clean the spaces between the fingers



6
Interlace the fingers and clean the backs of the fingers



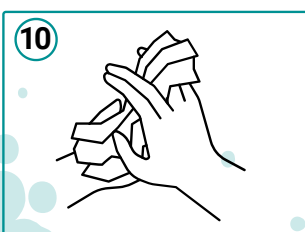
7
Clean the thumb of the right hand with a twisting motion, change sides



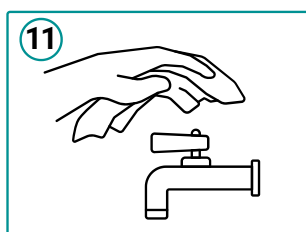
8
Rub fingertips on palm, alternate sides



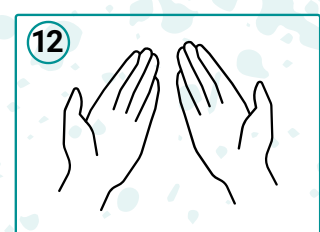
9
Wash off the soap



10
Dry hands thoroughly with a cloth



11
Turn off the tap with the cloth, avoid skin contact



12
You did it! Now your hands are clean. :)



The power of duration

The duration of soaping is crucial to the effectiveness of hand hygiene. Experts recommend washing your hands for at least 20 seconds. That's about the time it takes you to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice at normal speed.

This amount of time allows the soap to work its cleaning magic and effectively remove germs.

To add a little pep to the singing: How about the lyrical version of Jürgen Fastje for a change? :)

*"Happy Birthday to you,
jam in your shoe,
apricot in your pants
and a cake in your hands.*

*Happy birthday, hi there!
Chocolate in your hair,
gummi bears in the nose
and everything's clear!"*



SOAP: A CLEAN THING

Soap is a key aspect of hand hygiene and has a significant impact on the effectiveness of hand washing. What role does soap play in hand washing and what factors are crucial in choosing the right soap?



Cleaning power of soap

Soap is an effective cleansing agent used to remove dirt, grease, bacteria and viruses from the surface of the skin. Its chemical structure breaks up fat molecules and dissolves them in water. This process makes it possible to remove pathogens and other impurities from the skin. Without soap, many of these germs would stick to the hands and unleash their potentially harmful effects.

The types of soaps and their effects

There are several types of soaps on the market, including commercial liquid soaps, antibacterial soaps, foam soaps and solid bar soaps. Each of these types of soaps has specific properties and modes of action. Antibacterial soaps are specifically designed to kill bacteria. Traditional soaps, on the other hand, provide excellent cleaning by effectively removing not only bacteria but also dirt.

Choosing the right soap

The ideal soap for washing your hands should clean reliably while being gentle on the skin. If you have sensitive skin, choose mild soaps without too many additives. Note that excessive use of antibacterial soaps is not always necessary. In some cases it is even detrimental, as it also removes beneficial bacteria from the skin. Choose a soap that cleans your hands thoroughly without drying or irritating the skin.

Environmentally friendly soaps

In addition to properly caring for and cleansing your skin, you should also consider environmental issues when choosing a soap. Some conventional soaps contain ingredients that can harm the environment if used in large quantities. A better choice is eco-friendly soaps that are biodegradable and contain fewer harmful chemicals.

The soap that suits you and your skin needs will ensure that your hand washing is both effective and gentle.

Hand disinfection as a supplement

There are situations where hand sanitizer is a valuable supplement or to hand washing with soap. If you're out and about and don't have water available, disinfectant gels, sprays or wipes are a great way to rid your hands of germs. In medical facilities, disinfection as a supplement to hand washing is sometimes unavoidable.





THE NEED FOR DISINFECTION

Hand disinfection is especially useful when water and soap are not available or when additional protection against pathogens is needed.



Situations in which hand disinfection is recommended:

- On the road: when you are on public transportation, in public facilities, or traveling and do not have access to washing facilities.
- Medical environments: In healthcare facilities, hospitals and doctors' offices, hand sanitization is a standard practice to prevent the spread of infection.
- After contact with sick people: If you have been in contact with a sick person or have been in areas where pathogens may be spread.
- Occupational requirements: In certain professions, such as healthcare or the food industry, hand disinfection is part of standard hygiene practices.

- Let dry: Let your hands air dry. Avoid wiping or drying with a towel, as this can interfere with the effectiveness of the disinfectant.

Hand disinfection is especially important in situations where the transmission of pathogens can happen quickly.

At this point, it should be emphasized that hand disinfection cannot be considered a substitute for hand washing with soap. The combination of both methods, depending on the circumstances, is the best approach to keeping your hands clean and safe.

Application and dosage of disinfectants

Effective hand disinfection requires the proper use of disinfectants. Here are some important steps:

- The right disinfectant: use a disinfectant that has an alcohol content of at least 60%. Check the label to make sure it is appropriate.
- The right amount: put enough disinfectant on your hands to cover them completely. Too small an amount may be less effective.
- Rubbing: Rub your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to cover all palms, interdigital spaces, nails and wrists.



HAND WASHING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Hand hygiene is a habit that should be learned and practiced as a child. Children are curious and learn by observation and imitation. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to communicate the importance of hand hygiene and to set a good example. Through hygiene education, children learn early on how to protect themselves and others.

Age-appropriate hygiene education

The approach to hygiene education should be age-appropriate. Younger children can be introduced to hand washing through play, for example, by singing fun songs or using colorful soaps. Older children can be educated about the importance of hygiene and disease prevention so that they develop a deeper understanding.

Washing hands together

Make hand washing a positive habit for your family. By washing hands together with your children, you create a sense of belonging. You also show that hand hygiene is a shared concern.

Make handwashing part of the daily routine

Integrate handwashing into the family's daily routine. Emphasize that hands should be washed before eating, after using the toilet, and after playing outside. In this way, hand washing becomes routine and second nature.

them occasionally for their commitment. Positive reinforcement such as praise helps keep children motivated to wash their hands regularly.

Model healthy habits

Modeling healthy habits is the most effective way to convince your children of the importance of hand washing. If they see that adults are also practicing hand hygiene consistently and consciously, they will be more inclined to do it as well.

Hygiene education and handwashing for children and family are key components of health education. By establishing these habits in your household, you not only contribute to the health of your family, but you also contribute to the prevention of disease in society.



FAQ ON THE SUBJECT OF HAND WASHING

Why is hand washing important?

Hand washing is important to remove germs, bacteria and viruses from our hands and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. It is a basic hygiene measure that helps protect ourselves and others.

How often should I wash my hands?

It is recommended to wash your hands regularly. In any case, after going to the toilet, before eating, after contact with sick people and after using public transport or visiting public facilities.

Is warm water better for washing hands than cold water?

The water temperature is not as important as the duration and proper technique of hand washing. Cold water can be just as effective as warm water, as long as you soap your hands thoroughly and wash for at least 20 seconds.

Is disinfectant useful?

Hand disinfectant (min. 60% alcohol content) is useful if water and soap are not available. Especially when traveling, this is an alternative. Nevertheless, hand washing with soap and water remains the preferred method.





Why should I wash my hands for at least 20 seconds?

The recommended duration of at least 20 seconds allows the soap enough time to loosen dirt, grease and germs from the skin and clean it thoroughly.

Can I wash my hands without soap?

Washing hands with water removes surface impurities, but is less effective in fighting germs. Soap helps dissolve grease and bacteria from the skin and cleans it more thoroughly.

Does frequent hand washing dry out the skin?

Frequent hand washing can dry out the skin. Use mild, skin-friendly soaps and gently dry your hands after washing. Regular application of moisturizer can help maintain skin moisture.

Why is it important to dry hands thoroughly?

Damp hands can promote the spread of germs. Therefore, thorough drying after washing is important. Use clean towels or disposable paper towels to dry your hands thoroughly and avoid wiping them on clothing or other surfaces.



A large, dynamic splash of water in shades of light blue and white, filling the background. The water is captured in mid-air, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The splash is centered and spreads outwards, with many small droplets and larger, more defined splashes.

**KEEP CALM
AND
WASH YOUR
HANDS**

