

Resources

More information on hand washing – how and when to wash your hands - can be found in the Center for Hygiene and Health's brochure on Hand Washing for Better Health: [Handwashing Tips](#).

A handwashing demonstration can be viewed [Handwashing Demonstration](#).

The website for the International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene – the IFH – provides a wealth of health information: <http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/IFHAbout?OpenForm>.

Additional information about the H1N1 (swine) flu, transmission, prevention, and treatment can be obtained from the IFH at: [http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/861f122a098364b98025750800643950/D65827D163A02BFB802575A700337C78/\\$File/wineflu409_reviewed.doc](http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/861f122a098364b98025750800643950/D65827D163A02BFB802575A700337C78/$File/wineflu409_reviewed.doc).



Center for Hygiene & Health in the Home and Community

The Center for Health and Hygiene in the Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training, and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- Consumer food safety
- Home hygiene
- Daycare
- Preschool
- Homecare
- Sports and leisure activity
- Travel and hospitality

Simmons College
300 The Fenway
Boston, MA 02115
www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth

Proper Hand Washing to Reduce the Risk of Flu Transmission



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With the current H1N1 (swine) flu outbreak, proper handwashing technique should be used every time our hands need cleaning. According to the CDC, some scientists estimate that up to 80% of all infections are transmitted by our hands. Certain germs can live for several hours and maybe days on our hands unless we clean them. Handwashing is effective in reducing the transmission of the cold and flu viruses, as well as many germs that cause food poisoning. Handwashing is the **SINGLE** most important thing we can do to stay healthy every day.



Wash you hands! The single best thing you can do to prevent the flu.

What Soils Our Hands?

We know our hands should be washed when they are stained with dirt, food, or any chemical agent (paint, ink, cleaning products). Invisible germs, however, are even more important reason to wash our hands; the infections they cause are the leading cause of death and disease worldwide.¹ Soiled hands may transmit:

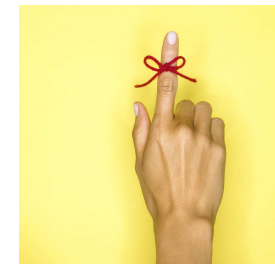
- Cold and flu viruses: touching a contaminated object (doorknob) and then putting our hand to our face can infect us; conversely, coughing or sneezing into our hands and then touching an object or person can contaminate others.¹
- Foodborne illnesses and diarrhea: almost 50% of “food poisoning” is caused by poor hand washing, either after handling contaminated raw meat or other food, or after using the toilet.^{1,2}
- Germs from pets: dog and cat saliva carries over 100 disease-causing germs. Reptiles can carry salmonella.¹
- Nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infections: healthcare workers, patients, and visitors can all carry dangerous germs from the hospital on their hands (MRSA, enterococcus, C. difficile.)²

¹Bloomfield, SF. The changing hygiene climate: a review of infectious disease in the home and community (DRAFT). At <http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/f5236e2da2822fef8025750b000dc985/29858aa006faaa22802572970064b6e8?OpenDocument>. Accessed on May 28, 2009.

²Sickbert-Bennett EE, Weber DJ, Gergen-Teague MF. Comparative efficacy of hand hygiene agents in the reduction of bacteria and viruses. *Am J Infection Control*. 2008;33(2):67-77.

How to Wash

- Wet hands and apply liquid, bar, or powder soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces: front and back of both hands, between the fingers, and around the nails.
- Continue for 20 seconds: this is like singing “Happy Birthday” TWICE.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the bathroom door.



REMEMBER

- Supervise children to make sure they wash their hands properly and for 20 seconds.
- Dry your hands thoroughly; damp hands spread 1000 times more germs than dry hands.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe or hand gel with at least 62% alcohol content.
- Alcohol gels can only kill germs on your hands; dirt and other material will require soap and water for removal.³

³<http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands>. Accessed on May 27, 2009.