



Handwashing Best Practices

Handwashing is a critical factor in reducing pathogens, which are microorganisms that cause illness. Some pathogens are on hands at all times, while that can contaminate hands through feces, vomit or environmental contamination. Without proper hygiene, these pathogens can transfer to ready-to-eat foods (RTE) and cause illness. Hand sanitizers are not a replacement for thorough handwashing.

Handwashing Steps



Step 1: Wet hands with warm water and soap



Step 2: Rub soap into hands and arms for 10-15 sec.



Step 3: Rinse hands with running water



Step 4: Dry hands with disposable paper towel



The Science Behind Handwashing

Step 1: Wet hands with warm water and soap

- Warm water helps active ingredients in soap work most effectively to lift dirt and pathogens from skin

Step 2: Rub soap into hands and arms for 10-15 seconds

- Minimum 10-15 second scrub is recommended to remove pathogens and help lift dirt and grease
- Antibacterial soap is no better than plain at reducing pathogens

Step 3: Rinse hands with running water

- Clean running water should be used to prevent re-contamination from dirty or previously used water
- Proper handwashing reduces pathogens by 100-1000-fold

Step 4: Dry hands with disposable paper towels or electric dryer

- Pathogens are transferred more easily to and from wet hands
- Using disposable paper towels is best practice as the friction from rubbing hands with paper towels helps remove more pathogens

When to Wash Your Hands

Before:

- Preparing food
- Touching RTE foods
- Putting on new gloves
- Beginning new task
- Switching from allergen to non-allergen foods

After:

- Using restroom
- Eating or smoking
- Touching hair, face or body
- Coughing or blowing nose
- Handling raw food
- Touching money
- Handling garbage, cleaning or clearing tables