

Infection Prevention and You



Holiday hand hygiene

The holiday season is a time for enjoying the company of our family and friends, marathon mall shopping to look for that perfect present, office parties, and interaction with many members of our community. It is a season that brings the irresistible smell of cookies, pies, and breads. A lot of handshakes and hugs are shared during this time as everyone makes it a point to gather in celebration.

Coincidentally, illnesses such as colds and the flu tend to flourish during this time as well. And who wants to miss out on spending time with others or tasting those delectable treats that beg for a bite? During this very busy time of year, it is important to clean your hands frequently.

Hand washing: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. That's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. Scrub your hands vigorously; use friction while covering all surfaces of the hands, including fingers.

Using alcohol-based hand rub: If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub containing at least 60 percent alcohol. Squirt a dime to quarter-size amount in the palm of your hand and then rub all surfaces of your hands and fingers until dry.

Recommended times to clean hands include:

- Before eating
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- After using the restroom
- After coughing, sneezing, or caring for someone who is ill
- After taking out the garbage
- After petting animals

So, have fun this holiday season, and remember that the easiest way to prevent the spread of infection is to clean your hands! Happy Holidays!

Additional resources

CDC – Wash your hands <http://www.cdc.gov/features/handwashing/>

WHO – Clean care is safer care http://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/

APIC – Wash your hands often <http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-in/healthcare-settings/wash-your-hands-often/>

Henry the Hand – Four principles of hand awareness <http://www.henrythehand.com/healthful-tips/t-zone/>

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