

## Proper Handwashing: The First Line of Defense Against COVID-19

The first line of defense against COVID-19 is the one basic protocol against any spread of illness: proper handwashing. This is a skill that has become vital in the last few weeks, and will become even more important as the weeks go on. Over the years, handwashing has become a basic habit that most take part in. However, with kids rushing to get from one activity to another, proper handwashing has been replaced with a quick and easy format. In today's world, with the rise of a pandemic, this method will no longer cut it. In this post, we'll share what the proper handwashing technique is, why it's important, and how it can help protect you from illness.

Let's start off by getting down and dirty with the proper handwashing technique. It starts with wet hands. Apply enough soap and scrub hands together to form a lather. Rinse, then dry hands with a clean towel. This is the basic technique to washing your hands; but in today's world, more attention must be paid in order to ensure every part of your hand gets clean.



To break it down further, follow these steps:

- Scrub palms over the back of each hand. Interlace fingers as you do so.
- Return to scrubbing palms while interlacing fingers.
- Scrub the backs of each finger against the palm.
- Scrub the fingertips against the palm, making sure to get soap underneath the fingernails.
- Grab each thumb and rotate palm around it.
- Scrub around each wrist.
- This process should take between 20 to 60 seconds. You may have heard that it takes about the same amount of time as singing Happy Birthday twice. Why not make things more interesting by coming up with a new song to sing each day. Come up with your own words and match them to the tune of Happy Birthday. Share your songs with friends and others through social media. See how many different variations people come up with. Take your time and make sure you get every nook and cranny. As an added challenge, come up with a way to limit the use of water during this process. For instance, letting the water run as you spend 20 to 60 seconds lathering up isn't very productive for water conservation. You can save at least 6 gallons of water per day simply by turning off the tap while you scrub your hands.
- So why is handwashing the first line of defense against COVID-19? Because we use our hands for everything. We touch things in our daily lives that interact with countless people. We then touch our faces, food, mouth, each other. When we touch something that carries a virus, it's very easy for that virus to enter our bodies. However, washing your hands removes that virus before it can spread to yourself or others.
- To keep things in perspective, the COVID-19 virus can live for several hours or even days on some surfaces. For example, if someone with the virus sneezes, it will stay in the air from 30 minutes to 3 hours. So it's important to always sneeze or cough into your sleeve or tissue, never in your hands. Once it lands on certain types of surfaces, it can be transferred to someone through touch days after it left someone's nose. For example, if you sneeze and particles of the virus land on cardboard, like a box of Macaroni and Cheese, someone can touch that box within 24 hours and have the virus. The

virus can live on stainless steel, like a fork or spoon, for 2 days. And on plastic, like a water bottle, for 3 days. That's why it's important to constantly be washing your hands. Scrubbing with soap and water will kill the virus before it spreads. Also, regularly clean high traffic surfaces, like faucets, handles and countertops.

## When To Wash Your Hands

