1. Have a paper towel ready.
2. Wet hands under warm water.
3. Apply soap.
4. Scrub backs of hands, wrists, under fingernails, and between fingers for 20 seconds (sing “Happy Birthday”).
5. Rinse hands under warm water.
6. Dry hands with a paper towel.
7. Turn faucet off with a paper towel.

Hand sanitizers do not replace proper handwashing. Hand sanitizers should not be used in place of proper handwashing, unless handwashing facilities are not available. If using hand sanitizer, apply it after you wash and dry your hands. Allow the sanitizer to air-dry on your hands.

- The soil and dirt on your hands may actually decrease the effectiveness of sanitizers.
- Frequent use of hand sanitizers can strip the outer layer of oil from your hands, leading to cracking and dryness, which can trap germs and bacteria.
- Hand sanitizers can be used in addition to good handwashing, but not as a substitute.
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.”

Microbes are everywhere. They are on surfaces in your home, in your school, at your work, as well as on your body, including your hands. While many microbes are not harmful, there are some that can make you sick. These disease-causing microbes, or germs, can cause colds, diarrhea, and serious illnesses such as hepatitis A, meningitis, and the flu. Handwashing helps rid your hands of germs, greatly decreasing the chances of you, or someone else, getting sick.

**WHY IS HANDWASHING IMPORTANT?**

**WHEN SHOULD I WASH MY HANDS?**

You should wash your hands frequently throughout the day, especially at the following times.

**After:**

- Using the bathroom
- Sneezing or coughing
- Petting animals
- Eating
- Handling raw foods, especially meats, poultry and fish
- Preparing food
- Handling any soiled or potentially contaminated items