

Hand Hygiene at Work



Hand hygiene is an easy, affordable, and effective way to prevent the spread of germs and keep employees healthy. Promoting clean hands within your workforce—whether your employees work in a classroom, in a retail store, in an office, at home, or in any other setting—can improve the health of your employees, customers, workplace, and even your community.

Hand Hygiene Benefits Everyone's Health

Germs can spread quickly. Hand hygiene is one of the best ways to prevent employees from getting sick and spreading germs to others in the workplace. Sick employees are less productive even when they come to work, and they can spread their illness to others. Promoting clean hands in the workplace can also result in employees using fewer sick days. Employees who make hand hygiene part of their routine also prevent spreading illness to their families at home and set an example for their loved ones to follow. Employees with healthy family members spend less time away from work taking care of their sick loved ones.

Good hand hygiene means regularly washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and then drying them. It can also mean using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not readily available.

Handwashing Benefits the Entire Community



Reduces respiratory illnesses, such as colds, by **21%**



Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by **31%**



Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by **58%**

Key Times for Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene can lower the chances of spreading illnesses to others when you shake hands or touch common surfaces and objects, such as tables and doorknobs. Key times for employees to clean their hands include:

- ▶ Before and after work
- ▶ Before and after breaks
- ▶ After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing
- ▶ After using the restroom
- ▶ Before eating or preparing food

Hand Hygiene at Work

If an employee's hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer.

Tips for Protecting Employee Health

- ▶ Place hand sanitizer dispensers with at least 60% alcohol near frequently touched surfaces, in areas where soap and water are not easily accessible, such as near elevators, shared equipment, building entrances and exits, etc.
- ▶ Provide soap, water, and a way to dry hands (e.g. paper towels, hand dryer) so employees can wash and dry hands properly at large gatherings.
- ▶ Wash hands before, during and after serving food at work events.
- ▶ Put visual reminders, like signs or posters, in bathrooms or kitchen areas to remind employees to wash their hands.
- ▶ Promote and model other healthy habits, such as covering coughs and sneezes, then washing hands.
- ▶ Clean surfaces, such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs regularly after using them.
- ▶ Tell sick employees to stay home until they are symptom-free.
- ▶ Remind co-workers to practice and model good hand hygiene at home and at work.

Remember to make handwashing a healthy habit at home, school and at play!
cdc.gov/handwashing

