

Hands Matter in Creating a Healthier World

The simple act of hand washing remains one of the most important ways to stop the spread of germs. Raising awareness about why, when, how and where we clean our hands is one of the most important examples of why hand hygiene matters in creating a healthier world.

How Dirty Are Your Hands?

Germs can be found on all surfaces of the hand. In fact, a particularly high concentration of bacteria is found under fingernails¹



Four areas people often forget to wash are their fingertips, thumbs, back of their hands and wrists²



Women claim to wash their hands about 9.5 times per day compared to 7.6 times per day on average for men³

Women typically wash their hands more than men, with 83% washing their hands after using the bathroom, whereas only 74% of men do the same⁴

Your Hands Matter

31% believe that **personal responsibility** is key to improving hygiene standards and public health⁵

85% say that they wash their hands **often enough**³

71% say that **others do not** wash their hands enough³

80% feel uncomfortable with unwashed hands in **social situations**³



Hands Matter for a Healthier World



Hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection⁵



20% of respiratory infections (e.g., the common cold) can be prevented through handwashing⁷



Good hand hygiene habits have been shown to effectively reduce the risk of hand, foot and mouth disease **in children** by up to 60%⁶



1 in 10 people globally suffer each year from foodborne diseases, often linked to preparing food with poor hand hygiene⁸

When to Wash Your Hands



After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing⁹



Before and after **preparing food and eating**⁹



After using the toilet or coming into contact with feces⁹



After touching a pet and handling its food⁹



Before and after **caring for a sick person** and treating a wound⁹



After **touching rubbish**⁹

How to Wash Your Hands

1. Wash your hands with lukewarm water and soap¹⁰



2. Scrub all sides, fingertips, fingernails and between your fingers – don't forget your thumbs¹⁰



3. Continue for about **20-30 seconds**¹⁰



4. Rinse well¹⁰



5. Dry well with a paper towel¹⁰



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
² Essity
³ SCA Hygiene Matters Report, 2016
⁴ Recent Handwashing Study Shows Gap between Knowing and Doing, American Society for Microbiology, 2003.
⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
⁶ Hand Hygiene Intervention Project in Kindergartens of Shenzhen City, China 2016
⁷ When and How to Wash Your Hands, CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
⁸ WHO's first ever global estimates of foodborne diseases find children under 5 account for almost one third of deaths, WHO, 2015.
⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
¹⁰ Essity General Handwashing Recommendations