



County of Erie

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hand Washing Guidelines

Hand washing is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. The Erie County Department of Health recommends the following guidelines on hand washing to help keep our community healthy.

What kind of soap should you use?

- Liquid or foaming soap is recommended over bar soap.
- There is insignificant scientific justification to recommend antibacterial soap over non-antibacterial soap.
- It is the action of rubbing hands together followed by flushing with lots of water that is most important, not the specific type of soap used.

How to wash your hands:

- Wet both hands with clean, running, warm water.
- Apply soap and rub hands together to make a lather.
- Rub hands together vigorously for at least **20 seconds** (HINT: imagine singing the “Happy Birthday” song twice)
- Be sure to wash your palms, in between fingers, wrists, backs of hands and under fingernails.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- When using a public sink, dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
 - If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the water faucet and open the door to exit.
 - Throw the paper towel in the trash.

When to wash your hands:

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

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