



How should you wash your hands?

- Use soap and warm, running water
- Lather and wash all thoroughly, including wrists, palms, back of hands, fingers, and under fingernails for at least 15 - 20 seconds
- Rinse hands well under warm, running water
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean paper or cloth towel or air dryer
- Apply hand lotion if desired to help prevent and soothe dry skin

Washing hands with soap and clean water for at least 15 - 20 seconds is a sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-healthcare settings and is recommended by the CDC and other experts. Hand sanitizers are a good alternative to use when soap and water aren't available. However, when hands are visibly soiled, they should be washed with soap and water.

Clean Hands Are Everyone's Responsibility

The Clean Hands Campaign, a continuing educational effort sponsored by ACI and ASM, is designed to remind Americans that Mom was right – you need to wash your hands!

Hand Hygiene Information Online

The American Society for Microbiology maintains a website, www.washup.org, that has downloadable educational materials about hand hygiene, as well as results of recent and previous handwashing surveys.

The American Cleaning Institute has updated hand hygiene-related news and educational materials on its website at www.cleaninginstitute.org/cleanhands and www.itsasnap.org.

ASM and ACI are members of the Clean Hands Coalition, an alliance of public and private partners working together to create and support coordinated, sustained initiatives to significantly improve health and save lives through clean hands. For information about National Clean Hands Week (the third week in September) and the "Clean Hands Save Lives" campaign, go to www.cleanhandscoalition.org.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site includes "Put Your Hands Together", a health education video to promote handwashing at www.cdc.gov/cdctv/healthyliving/hygiene/hands-together-hygiene.html



Don't get caught DIRTY-HANDED

Support the Clean Hands Campaign



Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

— CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION





Frequent and proper hand hygiene can stop germs and illness in their tracks.

Many cases of colds, flu, and foodborne illness are spread by unclean hands, and these diseases are responsible for billions of dollars each year in health care expenditures and productivity losses in the United States. Worldwide, infectious diseases remain the leading cause of illness and death and the third-leading cause of death in the United States. Good hand hygiene will also reduce the risk of spreading germs that have become resistant to antibiotics, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA. Some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like tables, doorknobs, and telephones. These disease-causing germs can enter your body when your unwashed hands touch your nose, mouth, eyes, or open wounds. Simple handwashing with soap and water can in some cases reduce infections by more than 50 percent.¹

¹Didier Pittet, "Clean hands reduce the burden of disease," *The Lancet*, www.thelancet.com, Vol. 366, July 16 2005, pgs 185 – 187.

When it comes to washing their hands, Americans say they are getting the message, but their actions speak otherwise.

Although nine out of ten (92%) Americans in a telephone survey said they always washed their hands after using a public restroom, an observational survey in four cities found the actual number to be more like 3 out of 4 (77%). That's down nearly 10% from a similar study done in 2005, and men are mostly responsible for the decline. Overall, the percentage of women observed washing their hands was down only slightly from 90% in 2005 to 88% in 2007.

Americans' self-reported hygiene behavior in 2007 remains consistent with what past surveys show. Among 1,001 men and women interviewed via telephone in 2007, 92 percent said they always wash their hands after going to a public restroom and 86 percent said they do likewise after using the bathroom in the home. In 2005, those figures were 91 percent and 83 percent, respectively.

Survey Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted telephone and observational studies on behalf of the American Society for Microbiology and The Soap and Detergent Association in August 2007. Telephone surveys were conducted with 1,001 respondents. Results were weighted for age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, household size, and education where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. They observed the behavior of 6,076 adults (of whom 3,065 were men and 3,011 were women, who appeared to be age 18 and older) in public restrooms located at major public attractions in the U.S., and recorded whether or not they washed their hands after using the facilities. The research was conducted in four cities and at six different locations: Atlanta – Turner Field; Chicago – Museum of Science and Industry and Shedd Aquarium; New York City – Penn Station and Grand Central Station; and San Francisco – Ferry Terminal Farmers Market.



When should you wash your hands?



- After using the restroom
- Before, during, and after preparing food, especially raw meat, poultry, or seafood
- Before and after meals and snacks
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses
- After touching animals or handling animal waste
- After changing a diaper
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick or injured
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- More frequently when you or someone in your home is sick
- Anytime your hands are dirty

