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**Hand washing is the most effective way of preventing the spread of germs and diseases. By washing your hands properly, and often, you can protect yourself as well as your family and even the community in which you live.**

### **When should I wash my hands?**

When in doubt, wash! It's important to keep hand-washing a priority because this practice is an effective way to stop germs from spreading. It's better to wash your hands too often than not enough, especially during the following instances:

- **Before** leaving your home and **after** you have arrived at your destination
- **Before, during, and after** preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **After** using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- **After** touching an animal (even pets), and their food or treats
- **After** touching any object you are bringing into the house

### **How do I wash my hands?**

Follow the five-step process below to ensure you're practicing proper hand hygiene:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water. It does not matter whether the water is cold or warm. After you've wet your hands, turn off the faucet before applying soap.
2. Use soap generously and cover both hands entirely.
3. Vigorously scrub your hands together for 20 seconds (the amount of time it takes you to sing "Happy Birthday" twice) to ensure you're cleaning the following areas: palms, backs of hands and fingers, between fingers, thumbs, all 10 fingernails, fingertips, and wrists.
4. Turn the water back on and rinse your hands completely. Wait to turn off the faucet until after you have dried your hands.
5. Dry your hands thoroughly. When possible, dry your hands with a towel, paper if available, before using that towel to turn off the faucet.

### **What hand soap should I use?**

- When it comes to hand soap, the brand doesn't matter, nor does the form
- If you choose bar soap over liquid soap, make sure to keep the soap dish clean, as a dirty dish can contain germs
- There is currently no evidence that there is an advantage to using antibacterial soap over plain soap and water

### **Alcohol-based hand sanitizers**

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used if you don't have access to soap and clean running water

- If you're using a hand sanitizer, make sure it contains at least 60% alcohol, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends you still try to wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol don't kill all germs, but they do inactivate viruses that are genetically and physically similar to COVID-19
- Hand sanitizers are not an effective way to clean hands that are visibly dirty
- Just like normal hand washing, make sure to completely cover your hands and rub them together until they are dry; this should take around 20 seconds