



# FACTS

## About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# HANDWASHING

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## *Why is handwashing so important?*

Handwashing takes only 15 seconds and yet it is the MOST important thing that you can do to reduce the spread of disease and to keep you from getting sick. When hands are washed using soap and warm running water, dirt, oils, and germs are loosened and removed from the surface of your skin.

## *What happens if you do not wash hands frequently?*

Frequent handwashing removes germs that may have been picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste. If contaminated hands are not thoroughly washed, these germs can infect you when you touch your eyes, nose, mouth or open sores. In turn, your unwashed hands can spread germs directly to other people or to the surfaces that they touch.

## *When should you wash your hands?*

Germs are too small to be seen with the naked eye. Therefore, frequent and thorough handwashing is strongly recommended:

- Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- Before, during and after food preparation
- Before eating, and before feeding a child/patient
- After using the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- After sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose into a tissue
- After handling garbage
- After changing a baby's diaper
- Before and after administering first aid or contact with bodily fluids
- More frequently when someone in your home is sick

over ...

For more information

DURHAM REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT

905-668-7711 1-800-841-2729 or [www.region.durham.on.ca](http://www.region.durham.on.ca)

## HANDWASHING

### *What is the correct way to wash your hands?*

- Wet hands with warm water and apply liquid or clean bar soap. If bar soap is used, the soap should be placed on a rack, allowing it to drain between uses.
- Rub hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces for a minimum of 15 seconds. The soap, combined with the scrubbing action, helps dislodge and remove germs.
- Rinse hands under warm running water. Point hands down and rinse from wrists to fingertips.
- Dry hands with a clean towel or paper towel. Taps should be turned off using the towel.
- Teach children how to properly wash their hands, and encourage frequent handwashing.

*The Durham Region Health Department - Handwashing Procedure Poster  
(8 1/2" x 11" copies available upon request)*



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