

Waterless or Soap and Water ~ Hand washing

Hand washing has been proven to be one of the best ways to prevent infection. Hand washing can be done with soap and water or the waterless hand washing product with an alcohol base. The goal of hand washing is to remove dirt and germs from the hands so urinary equipment is safer to use.

Important times to wash your hands:

1. After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
2. After going to the bathroom to urinate and/or have a bowel movement.
3. After doing yard work or outside work.
4. After playing or petting a pet as dog or cat.
5. After cleaning the house.
6. After caring for a child, an elderly person, and/or an ill person.
7. After your hands become dirty
8. Before preparing foods or drinks.
9. Before and after catheter care and bowel programs.
10. Before and after handling urinary drainage bags.
11. Before and after handling bandages, band aides, or dressings.

How to properly wash your hands with soap and water:

1. Remove jewelry and/or watches.
2. Turn on warm or cool water.
3. Soap your hands, rub the hands (front and back) together for at least 15 seconds, and make lots of suds.
4. Wash carefully between the fingers and under the fingernails.
5. Rinse soap off the hands.
6. Dry your hands with a clean towel or paper towel.
7. Use the towel to turn off the water faucets.
8. You can also use the towel to open the door.

A new gel or foam convenient product is now available for hand washing-an alcohol based waterless hand wash. The waterless hand wash can kill 99.9% of germs in 15 seconds of hand contact. The gel with emollients has a faster drying time as compared with the foam, has less skin irritation, and less skin dryness. The foam is preferred as it is fragrant, kind to the skin, and convenient. This product would be very useful in situations where soap and water is not available, such as: traveling in a car, camping, picnic, or outing with family or friends. These products can also be useful in the home as in the bedroom. An example of this product is Purell Instant Hand Sanitizer which is available as a gel or as a saturated hand towel.

Studies showed that health care workers used waterless hand washing products more frequently as compared to traditional soap and water hand washing in hospitals, as it is so convenient. This more frequent hand washing was associated with less number of infections within a hospital setting. It is recommended that the waterless hand wash be used no more than 12 times, then wash with traditional soap and water. This 12 (waterless hand wash): 1 (soap and water) washing pattern can then be repeated.

How to wash your hands with waterless product:

1. Apply the waterless hand wash to your hands.
2. Rub your hands together vigorously.
3. Rub both hands together, all surfaces, until the hands are dry.
4. Typical time involved with hand washing using waterless products is 17-21 seconds, which meets the minimum hand washing time of 15 seconds of soap/gel/form skin contact.

Hand washing is important if you use traditional soap and water or the new waterless hand wash products. Hand washing protects the person giving and receiving care. The success with hand washing is making it a habit and making soap-water or waterless hand washing convenient for the user.

References

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