

Which Soap is Best?

Antibacterial soap vs. Plain soap: Which is better?

Antibacterial soaps are no more effective than plain soap and water for killing disease-causing germs outside of healthcare settings. There is no evidence that antibacterial soaps are more effective than plain soap for preventing infection under most circumstances in the home or in public places. Therefore, plain soap is recommended in public, non-healthcare settings and in the home (unless otherwise instructed by your doctor).

Do antibacterial soaps promote antibiotic resistance?

There is no evidence that antibacterial soaps cause antibiotic resistance, but some scientists believe they may contribute to the development of antibiotic resistant germs.



Plain soap:

- Recommended for use in non-healthcare settings
- Easy to find in stores – read the label!
- Usually less expensive than antibacterial soaps
- Rubbing your hands is the most important step in cleaning your hands



Antibacterial soap:

- Not needed in businesses or most homes (unless directed by your healthcare provider).
- No more effective than plain soap in killing germs on your hands or body
- Must be left on your hands for about two minutes in order to have any effect on bacteria.

Liquid soap or bar soap?



Liquid soap:

- Liquid soap is generally recommended over bar soap for cleaning your hands. It is easy to use and will not spread germs from one person to another
- Many liquid soaps also include a moisturizing agent, so your hands may not dry out as quickly from frequently cleaning your hands



Bar soap:

- Germs can grow on bar soap and easily spread from one person to another
- Bar soap can be used in a household if no one has skin infections
- Bar soap should not be used in public places, or if anyone in your household has a skin infection

Another way to clean hands: Hand Sanitizer

- Wash your hands with soap and water when your hands are visibly soiled. If soap and water is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (wipes or gel).
- Food handlers in restaurants, schools, delis and grocery stores must wash their hands with soap and water before applying hand sanitizers. [Minn Rules Chap. 4626.0070 - 4626.0085]

References and more information is available on the MDH Hand Hygiene Website: www.health.state.mn.us/handhygiene



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