m1 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Make Hand Washing a Healthy Habit
FACT SHEET

Thorough hand washing can help prevent disease

- Handwashing plays a major role in preventing the spread of diseases.
- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water can protect you from many illnesses caused by viruses and bacteria.
- Washing removes germs you pick up when you touch people, animals, or surfaces.
    - If not removed, these germs may get into your eyes, nose, or mouth and cause illness.
- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) strongly encourages everyone to develop good handwashing habits.

You can't see germs

Germs hide on remote controls, door handles, keyboards, faucet handles and any surface people touch.

- Since we can never be sure what germs are on our hands, washing them regularly and thoroughly with soap and water is a very important safeguard against infectious disease.

1 square centimeter
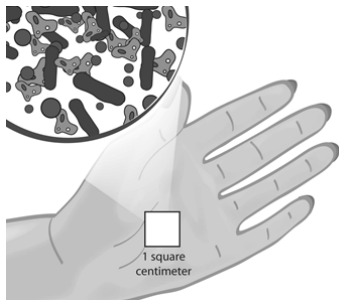
> *"Handwashing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infections."*
>
> *-- U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC)*

When to Wash

Overall, wash your hands as frequently as you can; it is **essential** to wash your hands at these special times:

- Before touching any food or eating
- After using the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal wastes

How to Wash

The following procedure will remove up to 99.9 percent of the germs that get on your hands during the course of daily activities:

- Wet your hands with clean water
- Apply soap
- Rub your hands together vigorously and scrub all surfaces
- Scrub for 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice)
- Rinse with clean water
- Dry hands briskly

Note: If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand-rub (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]