

Use Your Voice for Clean Hands

As a patient in a health care setting, you are at risk of getting an infection while you are being treated for something else. Patients and their loved ones can play a role in asking and reminding health care providers to wash their hands. Your hands can spread germs too, so protect yourself by washing your hands often. Hand-washing is one of the most important ways to prevent infections.



When should your health care providers wash their hands?

- Every time they enter an exam/procedure room and before touching you
- Before wearing gloves
- After removing gloves
- Wearing gloves alone is not enough to prevent the spread of infection
- Before starting any tasks on you (taking blood pressure, drawing blood, etc..)
- After contact with body fluids, nonintact skin, wound dressings
- When their hands are visibly soiled
- Upon leaving the exam room

Use your voice for clean hands

- Don't be afraid to use your voice: it's ok to ask your health care providers to wash their hands.

For better results, you too should wash your hands often.

When should I wash my hands?

- After touching hospital surfaces such as bedrails, bedside tables, doorknobs, remote controls
- Before eating
- Before, during and after preparing food
- After using the restroom
- After coughing, sneezing or caring for someone who is ill
- After taking out the garbage
- After petting animals

How should I wash my hands?

- **With an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:**
 - Put product on hands and rub hands together.
 - Cover all surfaces until hands feel dry.
 - This should take around 15 seconds or more.
- **With soap and water:**

- Wet your hands with warm water. Use liquid soap if possible. Apply a nickel- or quarter-sized amount of soap to your hands.
- Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather and then rub all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers and the area around and under the fingernails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 15 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel if possible. Then use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door if needed.

If you are being seen at National Jewish Health and you have questions or concerns; please contact the infection preventionist at 303.398.1275.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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