Proper handwashing helps prevent infection

Along with other measures – like coughing into your sleeve and staying home if you feel sick – frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infections like influenza and coronaviruses.

Health Canada recommends washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least 15 seconds – or as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday.” (If you’re at a public sink, it’s probably a good idea to sing it in your head.)

Follow these steps:

• Remove any jewellery and wet hands with warm water. Add regular (not anti-bacterial) soap, and rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds.
• Wash the front and back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
• Rinse well with warm running water.
• Dry your hands gently with a towel or paper towel.
• Use the paper towel to turn the tap off. If you’re in a public bathroom, use paper towel to open the door when you leave.
• If your skin is dry, use a moisturizing lotion.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if soap and water is not available.

Here are some other tips for protecting yourself and others:

• Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing, before and after eating, before cooking, after handling raw meat, after petting an animal, and after using the bathroom.
• Use a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or raise your arm and cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Don’t sneeze into your hand.
• Clean surfaces, including doorknobs, light switches, phones and computer keyboards.
• If you use bar soap, store it in a container that drains.
• Don’t use a single cloth to clean a group of children’s hands.
• Don’t use a standing basin of water to wash your hands – use running water.
• Don’t use a common hand towel.
• Change sponges and non-disposable cleaning cloths daily. Launder them using detergent.