

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.