

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Illinois 4-H Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H staff and volunteers

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF WASHING YOUR HANDS



Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to help avoid getting sick and spreading germs. Hands may be contaminated by germs that can be transferred to cause illnesses such as the common cold, influenza, infectious diarrhea, hepatitis A, giardiasis, enterovirus, and coronavirus. Proper hand washing reduces the number of people who get sick and help communities stay healthy.

### When to Wash Hands

- After using the toilet or changing a diaper.
- Before and after eating food.
- Before preparing food and after touching any uncooked meats.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- Before brushing your teeth.
- After touching an animal or handling animal toys, leashes, halters, saddles, or waste, including bedding materials, animal feed or animal waste.
- After handling garbage.
- Before and after treating an open wound.
- Before touching your nose, mouth, or eyes and before putting in or removing contacts.
- Whenever your hands are dirty from performing a task.
- After being in a public place and touched a surface that may be touched frequently by others: door handles, gas pumps, shopping carts, electronic screens.

### Proper Hand-Washing Techniques

- Always wet your hands with clean, warm, running water.
- Lather your hands with soap. Lather and scrub all of your hands, including between the backs of your hands, between fingers and under nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands together for at least 20 seconds or for the time it takes to sing the "A, B, Cs" once or "Happy Birthday" twice.
- Thoroughly rinse your hands under running water.
- Dry your hands using a single use towel or allow them to air dry.
- If possible, turn off the faucet with a paper towel.
- Dispose of paper towels in the trash receptacle.
- Only use a hand sanitizer when hand washing is not an option. When using a hand sanitizer:
  - Make sure the sanitizer includes at least 60% alcohol as an ingredient.
  - Place the sanitizer in one hand in the amount given on the label.
  - Begin rubbing both hands together while completely coating the surface of each hand with the sanitizer.
  - Continue rubbing your hands together until your hands and fingers are dry.



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