

Q.

Can hand washing help you avoid getting sick?

A.

Absolutely! Washing your hands with soap and water kills viruses that may be on your hands...

including the coronavirus.¹

If you want to avoid the common cold, flu virus, germs *and* the coronavirus...Wash. Your. Hands.

Makes sense, right? The problem... most people don't do it right, according to a recent study.²

Which hand-washing method looks the most like yours?

- **The Splash and Dash.** You just rinse with water after going to the bathroom. Faucet on... faucet off. And you're out of there. About 1 in 4 people think this is good enough.
- **The Dirty Little Secret.** You don't wash your hands at all after using the restroom. *Ahem, what would your mother say?* About 1 in 10 people don't wash their hands.
- **Operation: Lather Up.** You rinse, lather and scrub. Then rinse and dry. Just 5 percent of people wash their hands properly with soap and water after using the bathroom.

Here's the thing. If you don't wash your hands properly, germs, viruses, and bacteria on your hands can make you sick with symptoms like:

- Diarrhea
- Respiratory infections
- Skin irritations
- Eye infections
- A weakened immune system
- Digestive problems
- Vomiting
- Fever



Wash Your Hands

It's just too easy to transfer germs that can make you sick from dirty hands to your eyes, mouth, or nose. And it's why hand-washing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from the flu *and* the coronavirus.

The 20-Second Solution to Protect Your Health

Just 20 seconds of proper handwashing can remove up to 92 percent of germs that can make you sick.³

Here's how it's done in five simple steps:⁴

1. **Wet your hands** with clean water—warm or cold.
2. **Lather up with soap**—antibacterial or regular. Rub your hands together to cover your palms, between your fingers, under your nails, and the backs of your hands with soap.
3. **Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.** That's about how long it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
4. **Rinse your hands** off with clean water.
5. **Dry your hands** with a clean towel, paper towels, dryer, or just let them air dry.

If you want to stay healthy, make it a habit to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before and after taking care of someone who is sick

ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing into your hand
- After shaking hands with others or touching surfaces like hand rails, door knobs, vending or ATM machine buttons, and gas pump handles
- After using the restroom
- After changing diapers
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or waste
- After touching garbage

There's at least one more time you should wash your hands.

Any time your hands feel dirty, especially during cold and flu season and a global pandemic.

Take 20 seconds to protect your health, and wash your hands. It's one of the best ways to avoid getting sick.

References

1. World Health Organization. (2019). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public. From: <https://tinyurl.com/vr9ow5n>
2. Borchgrevink, C., et al. (2013). Hand washing practices in a college-town environment. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 75(8): 18-24. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y2jm8xnu>
3. Burton, M., et al. (2011). The effect of handwashing with water or soap on bacterial contamination of hands. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 8(1): 97-104. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y93oqqw3>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Wash your hands. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ycn9hsca>

