Hand Hygiene

Why should you wash your hands?
Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps anyone can take to avoid becoming ill and spreading microorganisms to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water.

People handling food have a particular responsibility to protect the health of those for whom they are providing food. They must keep their hands clean!

How to wash your hands?
Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm enough for comfort), turn off the tap, and apply soap.

Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the tips of your fingers and thumbs, the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end. Twice.

Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Did you know?
Wet hands are 5000 times more likely to pick up microorganisms than dry.

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Myth Busting
Water temperature directly affects hand washing efficacy
Not true. The temperature of water does not directly contribute to the removal of microorganisms. Water would need to be too hot for comfort if it was to kill organisms directly. When washing hands, water should be warm enough for comfort as a comfortable temperature encourages more thorough hand washing.

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References

Food, Hands & Bacteria William C. Hurst and A. Estes Reynolds, Extension Food Scientists
Originally prepared by George A. Schuler and James A. Christian, retired Extension Food Scientists, University of Georgia.


