

Why handwashing with soap and water is important

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Many germs that can make people sick are spread when we don't wash our hands with soap and clean, running water.

That is why handwashing is so important, especially at key times such as after using the bathroom, when preparing food, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. Handwashing with soap and water is simple and inexpensive, and it can significantly reduce the number of young children who get sick.

Teaching people about handwashing helps them and their communities stay healthy. Studies show that handwashing education in the community can:

- Reduce the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by about 23 per cent – 40 per cent
- Reduce the number of school days children missed because of gastrointestinal illness by 29 per cent – 57 per cent
- Reduce diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by about 58%
- Reduce respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by about 16 per cent – 21 per cent.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control