

The ABC's of Hand Washing

Marina bounced into the kitchen, ready for her afternoon snack. Without a reminder, she put her sturdy stool by the sink, turned on the warm water, rubbed her hands with soap, and washed her hands carefully, happily singing her ABC's. Auntie smiled proudly as she caught Marina's eye.

Hand washing is important for your whole family!

Even if your hands look clean, they probably carry germs (or bacteria). Germs are everywhere. If you wash your hands really well with warm soapy water, you can get rid of the germs.

Some germs can make you sick. Colds and flu can spread from one person to another in your family through unwashed hands. It's easy to contaminate food, too, with germs from dirty hands.

Always wash hands

Before:

- Handling food
- Eating a meal or snack

After:

- Handling food
- Using the bathroom
- Touching a pet
- Coughing or sneezing into your hands
- Combing hair
- Blowing your nose
- Changing a diaper
- Handling garbage

Help your child learn good hand washing habits:

- Follow good hand washing habits yourself. Your child will watch and follow what you do.
- Encourage your child to count slowly to 30, or to sing the *Alphabet Song* (which takes 30 seconds), to help make hand washing fun and long enough.
- Get a safe stepping stool so your child can reach the sink.
- Hang a hand-washing reminder by the toilet.



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Try this!

This may even surprise you! Show your child why good hand washing takes three things:

1) warm water, 2) soap, and 3) rubbing your hands for 30 seconds.

- **First mix.** Mix vegetable oil with cinnamon in a small bowl.
- **Now rub it in.** Let your child rub “cinnamon oil” on his or her hands.
- **Wash hands together** in four ways to remove the cinnamon:
 - 1) cold water only
 - 2) cold water and soap for 10 seconds
 - 3) warm water and soap for 10 seconds
 - 4) warm water and soap for 30 seconds. Rub your hands well! And remember to sing the Alphabet Song!

- **Talk about it.** What does it take to get all the cinnamon off? Cinnamon isn't harmful. But you can see it if you don't wash your hands right. Germs are invisible. You can't see them, so you must wash your hands right!

