

GUARDING AGAINST INFECTION: CORRECT HAND WASHING

Preventing infection is a priority during cancer treatment. Your body's natural defenses against infection will be weakened during cancer therapy. The number one way that infections are spread is through people not washing their hands properly. Follow the instructions below when washing your hands and teach all your family and friends this method of hand washing. Be sure to wash your hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after handling your pets. Washing your hands correctly should become a lifetime habit, not just something you do during cancer therapy.

Washing Your Hands

1. Turn on hot and cold water (until it's warm).
2. Apply soap to your hands.
3. Begin working soap into a lather (you need to scrub for approximately 15 to 20 seconds). Be sure to scrub under rings, between fingers, under fingernails, up to your wrist. A good way of making sure that you have scrubbed for enough time is to sing the song "Happy Birthday" to yourself while scrubbing.
4. If you are using a public rest room, dry your hands with a clean paper towel.
5. Use the paper towel to turn off the water (when you turned on the faucets, your hands were dirty so you don't want to touch the "dirty" faucets).
6. Use the paper towel to open the door to the rest room.



Using a Waterless Hand Cleaning Product

If you are in a place where soap and water are not available, you may use one of the new waterless hand cleaning gels. These gels contain alcohol, so they will dry out your skin if you use them all the time, but they are useful when you have no water close by. These products are available in drugstores and supermarkets; for example, CVS and Walgreen's carry their own store brands called Instant Hand Sanitizers.

1. Apply gel to the palm of one hand (the amount will vary with the product you are using).
2. Rub hands together, spreading the gel over all surfaces of your hands and fingers.
3. Rub your hands together until the gel has dried.