

# Hand Washing

One of the most important things you can do to prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses is to wash your hands. In fact, the Food Code requires that all food employees keep their hands and exposed portions of their arms clean. By frequently washing your hands, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people or from contaminated surfaces, and prevent the spread of diseases.

## When should you wash your hands?

You should wash your hands often. Probably more often than you do now, because you can't see germs with the naked eye, or smell them, so you do not really know where they are hiding. Food employees should **always** wash their hands:

- After using the bathroom,
- After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portion of arms,
- After caring for or handling support animals or aquatic animals such as fish in aquariums, shellfish or crustacean in display cases,
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking,
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils,
- During food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination an to prevent cross contamination when changing tasks,
- During food preparation, before putting on a new pair of gloves,
- When switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food, and
- After engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands, such as clearing tables, handling dirty dishes or taking out the trash.

## What is the correct way to wash your hands?

It is estimated that one out of three people do not regularly wash their hands, even after using the bathroom. The following four steps will help you make sure your hands are properly washed.

1. Wet your hands under warm, running water and apply a liquid, powder or bar soap.
2. Rub your hands together vigorously, paying attention to all surfaces. Clean under fingernails and between fingers.
3. Continue scrubbing for 20 seconds or about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" through twice. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove dirt and germs.
4. Rinse thoroughly under running water and dry your hands using an appropriate method, like individual disposable towels, a continuous towel system that supplies the user with clean towels or a heater-air device.

For more information, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at 417-864-1424.