Washing your hands

Hand washing is important:

- If hands are not clean they can spread germs.
- **You should wash your hands thoroughly and often** with soap and warm water and **especially**:
  - When hands look dirty
  - Before and after preparing, serving or eating food
  - Before and after dealing with sick people
  - Before and after changing the baby's nappy
  - Before and after treating a cut or a wound
  - After handling raw meat
  - After going to the toilet or bringing someone to the toilet
  - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
  - After handling rubbish or bins
  - After handling an animal or animal litter/droppings
  - After contact with flood water
- A quick rinse will not work – your hands will still have germs. To wash hands properly:
  - Rub all parts of the hands and wrists with soap and water for **at least** 15 seconds (or as long as it takes to sing the *"Happy Birthday to you"* song two times!)
  - Don't miss out on washing your finger tips, between your fingers, the back of your hands and the bottom of your thumbs – the pictures here will help.

Getting ready to wash your hands:

1

- Remove hand & wrist jewellery - rings, watch, bracelets

2

- Wet hands thoroughly under warm running water

3

- Apply a squirt of liquid soap to cupped hand

Washing your hands - take at least 15 seconds/the time it takes to sing the "Happy birthday to you" song twice!

4

- Rub palm to palm 5 times making a lather/suds

5

- Rub your right palm over the back of your left hand and up to your wrist 5 times
- Repeat on the other hand

6

- With right hand over the back of left hand, rub fingers 5 times
- Repeat on the other hand

7

- Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced

8

- Wash both thumbs using rotating movement

9

- Wash nail beds—rub the tips of your fingers against the opposite palm

Rinsing and drying your hands:

10

- Rinse hands well making sure all the soap is gone

11

- Dry hands fully using a clean hand towel or a fresh paper towel
- Bin paper towel after use

Remember -
Clean hands save lives & stop the spread of many infections

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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Adapted from Handwashing technique poster HSE Strategy for Antimicrobial Resistance in Ireland; additional image: Dreamstime.com: *Putting some soap on hands* © Adamgregor