

## The Importance of Handwashing At This Time of Year



During this busy season it is important to identify health behaviors that will proactively assist our members in the prevention of illness and promotion of health. National Handwashing Week, recognized December 2-8, is a good example.

Our December Clinical Initiatives' identify some of the root causes of preventable illness through simple techniques and good practices with hand washing.

Through education and raising awareness with our population, the outcome for a happy and healthy season is positive so our members may enjoy the benefits of sharing with family and friends.

We are charged with providing our members with this information in order to remind them of the necessity of good health practices, not only during the busy holiday season, but throughout the year!

Happy Holidays!

## References

1. Centers of Disease Control - Hand washing: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>
2. University of Nebraska - Lincoln Extension Services: [www.food.unl.edu/web/safety/handwashing](http://www.food.unl.edu/web/safety/handwashing)

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## Holiday Health Is In Your Hands

During this holiday season we often are invited out to eat at restaurants, other families' homes, friends and even office parties. But too often we get ready to dig into the delightful meal that is prepared for us but yet we forget to wash our hands. Unfortunately, this is also the season of high rates of reports of food borne illnesses.

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness. Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

### When is the right time to wash your hands?

- You should wash your hands right before, during and after handling food or eating.
- Using the bathroom or changing diapers
- Sneezing, blowing your nose or coughing
- Touching a cut or open sore
- Playing outside or with pets
- After touching garbage
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick

### What is the correct way of hand washing?

- Wet your hands with WARM, running water.
- Add soap and rub hands together, front and back, between fingers and under nails for about 20 seconds. Hum the "Happy Birthday" song for beginning to end twice.



- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry hands with a clean paper towel.
- Turn off water with use paper towel(s) before throwing it away.

### What if I don't have soap and clean running water?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. Now if soap and water are unavailable then you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands. But remember that sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty.

For more information and videos on hand washing check out the Centers of Disease Control website: <http://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/handstogether/>

So remember, before eating that delicious spread of a meal today; make sure you wash your hands!