

Handwashing

Body & health

The technique, the duration, and when it matters most.

The WHO technique, condensed. Soap and water beat gel on visibly dirty hands.

1

Wet and lather

Warm or cold water both work. Soap is what lifts the grease.

2

Palms, then backs

Palm to palm, then each palm over the back of the other hand.

3

Between the fingers

Interlace and rub. This is the most commonly missed area.

4

Thumbs and fingertips

Rotate each thumb in the opposite palm; scrub fingertips into the palm.

5

Rinse and dry

Dry thoroughly — damp hands transfer microbes more readily.

WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Before preparing or eating food

After the toilet

After handling raw meat

After coughing, sneezing or public transport

Alcohol gel works on clean hands and against most viruses, but not against norovirus or *C. difficile* spores.