

# Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene means keeping your body clean. Practicing good personal hygiene helps to keep infection and illness away. It also helps you avoid spreading illness to other people.

## Hand washing

Germs get on your hands from the things that you touch throughout the day. Washing your hands properly and often is a good way to prevent these germs from making you sick and spreading sickness to others.

### When should I wash my hands?

You should wash your hands whenever you think they are dirty. You should also wash your hands:

- Before and after preparing food.
- Before and after caring for a wound on your skin.
- Before and after eating.
- Before touching any part of your face.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- After using the bathroom.
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose.
- After touching an animal.
- After touching trash or something dirty.
- After changing a diaper.
- After gardening or working outside.



### How should I wash my hands?

If running water is available:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water.
2. Apply liquid soap or bar soap to your hands.
3. Rub your hands together quickly to create lather.
4. Keep rubbing your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Thoroughly scrub all parts of your hands, including under your fingernails and between your fingers.
5. Rinse your hands with clean, running water until all the soap is gone.
6. Dry your hands using an air dryer or a clean paper or cloth towel, or let your hands air-dry. **Do not** use your clothing or a soiled towel to dry your hands.

If you are in a public restroom, use a paper towel to:

- Turn off the water faucet.
- Open the bathroom door.

If soap and clean running water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe, spray, or hand gel (*hand sanitizer*). Rub it all over the surfaces of your hands.

## Bathing

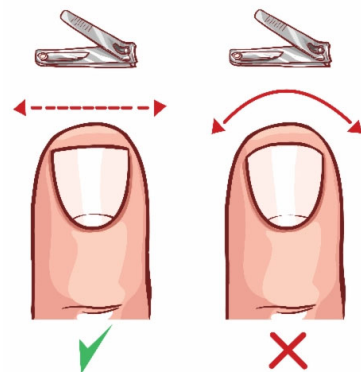
Bathing helps to prevent infections, body lice, and other problems from developing. Follow these bathing tips:

- Shower or bathe frequently.
- Take a shower or a bath after exercise or rigorous activity that causes you to sweat.
- Use a soapy washcloth to clean all areas of your body, including skin folds. Start the cleaning at your head and face area, then continue to your arms, abdomen, back, legs, genitals, and butt.
- When cleaning the genital area, wash from front to back. For males, this means starting at the tip of the penis. For females, this means starting at the folds of skin around the vagina (*labia*).
- Rinse off all of the soap.
- Dry yourself with a clean towel.

## Fingernail care

Keeping your fingernails clean and trimmed can prevent infection and fungal outbreaks. Follow these fingernail care tips:

- Keep your nails trimmed with nail clippers.
- Loosen dirt from under your nails with nail clippers or a scrub brush.
- **Do not** bite your fingernails.



## Foot care

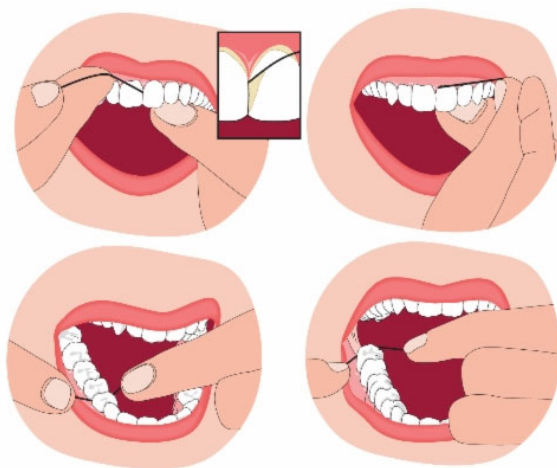
Keeping your feet clean and your toenails trimmed can help you avoid infection, irritation, and fungal outbreaks. Follow these foot care tips:

- Wash your feet with soap and water every day, if possible.
- Wash your feet after activity and sweating.
- Dry your feet after you wash them. Make sure you dry the areas between your toes.
- Trim your toenails straight across. **Do not** trim them too short because this can lead to ingrown toenails.
- Keep your footwear clean and fresh. Wash your sneakers and clean the inside of your shoes regularly.
- Consider using foot powders to reduce moisture in your shoes. This can help prevent the growth of fungi and other germs.
- Always wear shoes or flip-flops in public showers, pool areas, lockers, and training facilities.

## Oral care

Brushing and flossing your teeth and rinsing your mouth can help wash away bacteria that can lead to infection. Follow these oral care tips:

- Brush your teeth at least 2 times a day for 2 minutes.
- Floss your teeth at least 1 time each day.
- Brush your tongue daily. A tongue brush is often on the backside of a toothbrush.
- Use an oral rinse as told by your dentist.



## **Hair care**

Caring for your hair can prevent head lice. Head lice are tiny insects that feed on the scalp and cause itching and irritation. Follow these hair care tips:

- Shampoo your hair regularly.
- Brush your hair every day. Start at your scalp and continue to the ends of your hair.
- Use only your own comb or brush.
- Pull out the loose hair from your combs and brushes.
- Clean and disinfect your hair tools regularly.
- Avoid head-to-head contact with other people.
- Avoid sharing:
  - Hair styling tools.
  - Hair accessories, such as barrettes and headbands.
  - Headphones.
  - Hats, scarves, and earmuffs.

## **Personal items**

Follow these tips about caring for your personal items:

- Never share personal hygiene items, such as towels, razors, or deodorant.
- Throw away disposable razors after a few uses.
- Make sure that you use only your own personal items in public facilities such as showers, lockers, and pools.

## **Summary**

- Practicing good personal hygiene helps keep infection and illness away.
- Good personal hygiene also helps you avoid spreading illness to other people.
- Bathing, hand washing, oral care, and foot care are all part of a good personal hygiene program.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.