

Soap vs. coronavirus: Hand-washing tips for you and your kids

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You've surely seen them many times—those folks who scurry past the

sink after using a public toilet or give their hands no more than a quick, soap-free rinse.

These days, that's risking public shame and disease. The rapid spread of coronavirus around the world has underscored the importance of washing your hands frequently and doing it right.

But what's the best way to scrub away disease-causing germs? And how long does it take?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends washing your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. That's longer than you might think—roughly as long as it takes to hum "Happy Birthday" twice from beginning to end.

Dr. Latania Logan, a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, retooled the childhood song "Are You Sleeping, Brother John?" to teach kids how to wash properly. But the step-by-step also applies to adults, who may have gotten lax about hand hygiene over time.

Sing it to yourself twice, once while scrubbing and a second time while rinsing, Logan suggests:

Tops and bottoms,

Tops and bottoms,

In between,

In between,

Scrub them all together,

Scrub them all together,

Till they're clean,

Squeaky clean.

After washing your hands, Logan said it's important to dry them off

completely and turn off the faucet with a paper towel. It's an important—and easy—way to prevent [disease](#) from spreading, and it's important even when you aren't sick.

"This is the [time](#) of the year where there are many viruses going around, including the flu and many cold viruses, and as everybody has heard, this novel coronavirus," Logan said. "With children, a lot of them if they do have or do get it are probably very mild in their symptoms. They may have a cold or just a mild cough and won't get very ill. But that doesn't mean they can't spread germs."

Besides washing the right way, Logan emphasized the need to keep your kids well-informed during the [coronavirus](#) outbreak, when social media and misinformation can be upsetting.

"The first thing to do is listen to them so you can understand their concerns and give them the appropriate information," Logan said.

Use calming techniques—such as breathing exercises—for children who are experiencing any anxiety about getting sick.

Logan demonstrates best [hand](#)-washing techniques here:

More information: The World Health Organization has more on the [coronavirus outbreak](#).

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