

# The proper way to wash your hands

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Dec. 6-12 is National Hand-Washing Awareness Week. It's a good reminder that frequent hand-washing remains the best defense against the spread of viruses, including influenza and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

But to be effective, it has to be done the right way. Dr. Gregory Poland, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases expert, explains.

To properly wash your hands, follow these steps:

Wet your hands with clean, running water—either warm or cold.

Apply any kind of soap and lather well.

Rub your hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Remember to scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, palms, between your fingers and under your fingernails.

Rinse well.

Use a clean towel to turn off the faucet and dry your hands.

Dr. Poland says it's important to keep in mind that the faucet and [door handles](#) may be contaminated, so once you have washed your hands, use a towel to avoid contacting any of these surfaces as you exit the bathroom.

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