

# Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Handwashing Procedures and Frequency Guidelines

## 1. Purpose

This SOP outlines **handwashing procedures and frequency guidelines** to ensure proper hygiene, prevent the spread of germs, and reduce infection risks in all applicable settings.

## 2. Scope

Applicable to all staff, visitors, and individuals within the facility or environment where hygiene is a priority (e.g., healthcare, food service, childcare, and general workplaces).

## 3. Definitions

- **Handwashing:** Cleaning hands using water and soap to remove dirt, pathogens, and contaminants.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** Alcohol-based solution (minimum 60% alcohol) used to reduce microbes when soap and water are unavailable.

## 4. Handwashing Procedures

1. Wet hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
2. Rub hands together to create lather, ensuring to scrub:
  - Backs of hands
  - Between fingers
  - Under nails
  - Wrists
3. Scrub hands for at least **20 seconds** (hum "Happy Birthday" song twice).
4. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
5. Dry hands completely using a clean towel or air dryer.
6. If available, use the towel to turn off the faucet.

**Note:** If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and rub all surfaces of hands until dry (minimum 20 seconds).

## 5. Recommended Soap Types

- **Regular liquid soap:** Preferred for most settings, effective at removing germs.
- **Antibacterial soap:** Optional in healthcare or similar environments.
- **Bar soap:** Acceptable if regularly cleaned and allowed to dry between uses.

## 6. Critical Handwashing Moments

When to Wash	Examples
Before	Preparing/eating food, treating wounds, caring for someone ill

After	Using restroom, handling garbage, coughing/sneezing, contact with blood or bodily fluids, touching animals, outdoor activities
Other Instances	After removing gloves, after touching surfaces in public spaces

## 7. Frequency Guidelines

- Wash hands at the start and end of work shifts.
- Wash hands after each listed critical moment above.
- Wash hands more frequently in outbreaks, flu season, or high-risk environments.

## 8. Additional Guidelines

- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Avoid wearing rings and watches during handwashing-intensive tasks.
- Maintain hand hygiene supplies (soap, paper towels, sanitizer) at all times.

## 9. Responsibility

- All employees and visitors must adhere to these procedures.
- Supervisors/managers are to promote and monitor compliance.

## 10. References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#)
- World Health Organization (WHO): [Clean Care is Safer Care](#)