

HAND WASHING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO AVOID SPREADING INFECTIONS AND TO PREVENT GASTROENTERITIS

WHY WASH YOUR HANDS ?

Remember that the disease spreads through the stools of the infected person and that his or her hands can serve as a route of transmission for the disease.

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS ?

Wiping hands on a damp cloth is not enough. It is important to wash hands thoroughly.

To be effective, good hand washing takes at least 15 seconds. However, you should rub skin and nails for at least 45 seconds if they are visibly soiled.

WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS ?

- ✓ Before handling food or kitchen utensil.
- ✓ Before eating.
- ✓ After preparing food, especially raw meat or poultry.
- ✓ After going to the toilet.
- ✓ After changing a baby's diaper or helping a child go to the toilet.
- ✓ After touching an animal, cleaning its habitat (aquarium, cage, litter, etc.) or handling pet food.
- ✓ After handling garbage.
- ✓ After sneezing or blowing one's nose.
- ✓ After smoking.
- ✓ Every time you think it is necessary.

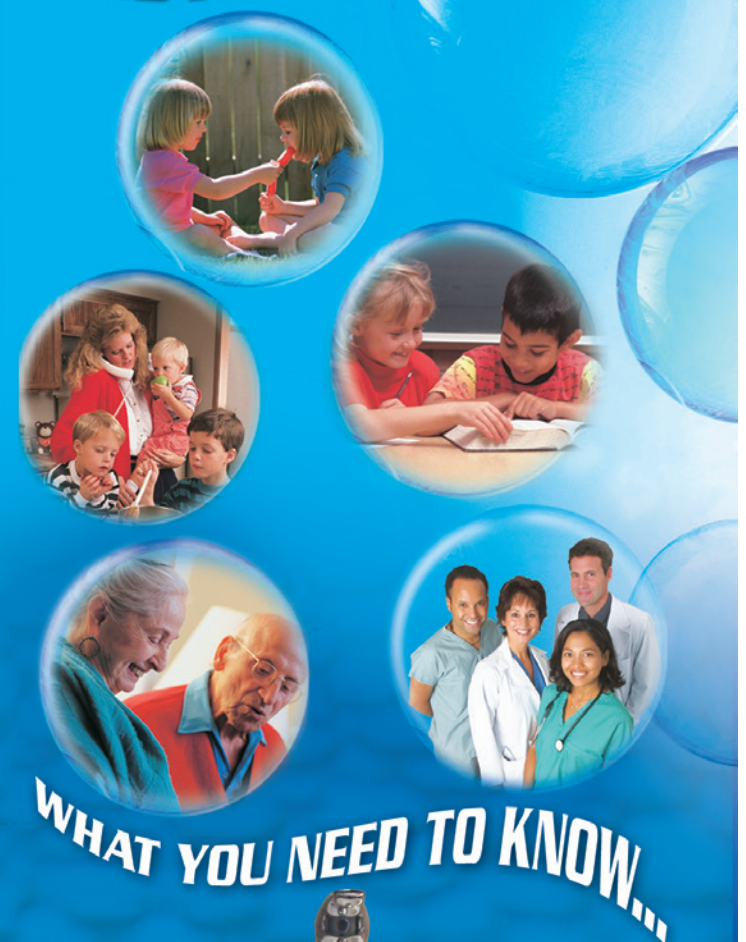
HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS ?

1. Remove watch and jewellery.
2. Turn on the tap and wet hands under running water (preferably warm).
3. Apply soap (liquid soap recommended).
4. Rub hands together vigorously, palm against palm, and then scrub the backs of hands and wrists.
5. Interlace fingers and move them back and forth to clean the spaces between them.
6. Scrub fingertips and nails (use a small brush if needed).
7. Rinse well under running water.
8. Use a paper towel to dry hands thoroughly and to turn off the tap.

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GASTROENTERITIS



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...



Québec



An original concept of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Chaudière-Appalaches

WHAT IS GASTROENTERITIS ?

It is an inflammation of the stomach (gastro) and the bowels (enteritis).

It can be caused by bacteria, a virus, a parasite or a chemical product (pesticides, metals).

Symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhoea and bloating; fever or blood in the stools may also occur. A person can develop one or several symptoms at the same time, within an hour should the cause be a chemical product, and within 2 hours to several days or even a week should the cause be an infection. Symptoms can last from 2 to 3 days and, in some cases, a week or more.

How is it contracted ?

Through badly washed hands which have been in contact with contaminated stools or objects.

Through contact with the stools of an infected person.

Through untreated contaminated water (water from brooks, lakes, rivers, springs, etc.) or water from an organically contaminated well.

Through food contaminated by not being stored, preserved or handled properly. Some foods present a higher risk of contamination: meat which has not been properly preserved or cooked (medium rare or rare), unpasteurised milk, unwashed fruit and vegetables, raw or lightly cooked eggs as well as uncooked mixes or preparations that contain eggs (eggnog, homemade mayonnaise, meringue...), etc.

Through contact with certain animals (birds, fish, reptiles, etc.) or when cleaning their cage, aquarium, litter, etc.

Through drinking contaminated water and/or eating contaminated foods while travelling in certain countries (drinking water and sanitary facilities may be inadequate in some destinations).

Oral sex increases the risk of enteric infection transmission.

How can you protect yourself and others ?

Wash your hands often (soap and warm water).

Follow certain basic rules when handling food (additional information is available at the regional Info-Santé service).

Examples :

- ✓ Keep foods which are meant to be cold, cold (between 0°C and 4°C), and foods which are meant to be served hot, hot (60°C and higher). The danger zone (between 4°C and 60°C) causes infectious agents to multiply (bacteria, viruses, etc.) in the food.
- ✓ Thaw meat either in the refrigerator at 4°C or lower, in a conventional oven when you put it in for cooking, or in a microwave oven just before you will be cooking it. Never leave food on the counter to thaw out at room temperature.
- ✓ Keep all work surfaces and utensils very clean; never handle cooked food with utensils or dishes that have been used to prepare raw foods.
- ✓ Thoroughly wash or peel fruit and vegetables that will be eaten raw.
- ✓ Cook eggs until they are firm (egg yolks and whites not runny) and use commercial pasteurised egg preparations for foods that won't be cooked.

Avoid sharing utensils, dishes or glasses that have not been thoroughly washed.

If drinking untreated water or using it to prepare food (from brooks, lakes, rivers, springs, etc.), always boil it for 1 minute beforehand.

Ensure that private water systems (shallow wells, artesian wells, etc.) are regularly maintained. In case of doubt or when authorities issue a boil-water advisory, boil water for 1 minute.

When travelling to a foreign country, ensure that the drinking water is safe before having some. In tropical areas, tap water should never be considered safe, even in luxury hotels. Use only sealed bottled water to drink, to wash fruit and vegetables, to brush your teeth and avoid ice in your drinks.

A person should not carry out regular daily activities (daycare, school, work, etc.) while he has symptoms and if there is an increased risk of spreading the disease. Call the regional Info-Santé service for more information.

When a family member has gastroenteritis :

Once a day, use soap and water and then a disinfectant* to clean taps, the toilet and toilet seat, the table used to change the baby, toys, and any other object that might be contaminated.

* Use a bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

ORAL REHYDRATION

1 1/2 cups (360 ml) unsweetened orange juice, either fresh or frozen (made with boiled water)
2 1/2 cups (600 ml) boiled water
1/2 tsp. (2.5 ml) salt

As soon as diarrhoea begins, drink small quantities of this preparation as often as possible and following every bowel movement.

If symptoms persist or worsen, contact your local Info-Santé service.

What should be done if there is one or several cases of gastroenteritis in a daycare, in a senior citizens home or in any other institution?

Contact the regional Info-Santé service as soon as possible to find out what should be done to avoid spreading the infection.