

Soap, Sanitizer and Handwashing 101

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Parents everywhere have been telling children to wash their hands, but the current health emergency has made good hand hygiene even more important. Using the right soap or an effective sanitizer are key to helping you keep yourself and your family healthy. How do you know your hand sanitizer is the best kind to use – or if you should use the hand dryers in public restrooms? Here are answers to some commonly asked questions about good handwashing measures:

Do I really need to wash my hands for 20 seconds?

Scientific studies show that you need to scrub for 20 seconds to remove harmful germs and chemicals from your hands. If you wash for a shorter time, you will not remove as many germs. Make sure to scrub all areas of your hands, including your palms, backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails.

How does handwashing with soap and water remove germs and chemicals?

Soap and water, worked into a lather, trap and remove germs and chemicals from hands. Wetting your hands with clean water before applying soap helps you get a better lather than applying soap to dry hands. A good lather traps and remove germs, harmful chemicals and dirt from your hands. When you rinse your hands, you wash the germs and chemicals down the drain.

Is antibacterial soap better than plain soap?

Studies have not found any added health benefit from using antibacterial soap, other than for professionals in healthcare settings.

Is bar soap better than liquid soap?

Both bar and liquid soap work well to remove germs.

Should I dry my hands using a paper towel or an air dryer?

There is currently not enough scientific evidence to determine if using a clean towel or an air hand dryer to dry your hands is more effective at reducing germs on your hands. Both are effective ways to dry your hands. Germs spread more easily when hands are wet, so make sure to dry your hands completely, whatever method you use.

Which is better, hand sanitizer or handwashing?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to remove all types of germs and chemicals. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

How do hand sanitizers work differently than handwashing?

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers work by killing germs on your hands, while washing your hands with soap and water removes germs from your hands. Handwashing will remove all types of germs from your hands, but hand sanitizers are not able to kill all types of germs or remove harmful chemicals like pesticides and heavy metals.

What if I have a hand sanitizer that has no alcohol?

Hand sanitizers without at least 60% alcohol don't consistently kill germs.

These answers as well as a wealth of other information and tips about COVID-19 can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

Employees can find information on the company's response to COVID-19 on the *FirstEnergy Today* portal, the [Corporate Health & Safety SharePoint site](#) or [MyFirstRewards.com](#). Please print and post important information for employees who do not access the portal routinely.