

Handwashing tips

6 Tips to protect your hands

With the COVID-19 outbreak, experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) are encouraging everyone to wash their hands frequently.

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of infections. Unfortunately, the way we wash our hands will also break down the barrier we are trying to protect. If our hands become cracked and sore then they are no longer considered 'clean'.

1. **Wet hands before applying soap.** Applying soap before water will cause your hands to be dry.
2. **Use a moisturising soap.** Where possible use a soap with a creamy consistency with ingredients such as glycerine and lanolin. Avoid bar soaps. Bar soaps usually have a higher pH which can cause dryness.
3. **Wash hands with lukewarm water.** Avoid using hot water. Hot water strips your hands of any natural oils that it needs to stay waterproof.
4. **Don't scrub your hands too vigorously.** This is usually because we are in a rush. Try not to aggravate your skin.
5. **Pat dry with paper towel.** Avoid rubbing skin with towel/paper towel.
6. **Use hand cream.** When water isn't sealed into the skin after washing, it can dry out your hand. The reason is that water acts like a magnet and it will attract water out from the deepest layers of the skin and evaporate into the dry air. The result is even tighter, drier skin. To prevent this from happening, be sure to immediately apply hand cream afterward. Moisturisers help with skin care because they:
 - restore the barrier function of the epidermis
 - provide a protective film
 - fill in the small crevices between scales
 - increase the water content of the epidermis
 - soothe the skin
 - improve the skin's appearance and texture