

Clean Hands Cheat Sheet

Soap or sanitizer? Soap first, sanitizer second.

Educational only, not medical advice.



October 15 is **Global Handwashing Day**. According to the CDC, **washing with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs** in most situations.¹

SOAP FIRST, SANITIZER SECOND

How to wash, the CDC way

- ☐ **Wet and lather.** Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.¹
- ☐ **Scrub at least 20 seconds.** Hum Happy Birthday twice.¹
- ☐ **Rinse, then dry.** Dry with a clean towel or an air dryer.¹
- ☐ **No soap and water? Use sanitizer.** Pick one with at least 60% alcohol. Check the label.^{1,2}
- ☐ **Dirty or greasy hands? Skip the sanitizer.** Don't use it on visibly dirty or greasy hands. Wash with soap and water.^{1,2}

Kids and sanitizer

FDA: Drinking even a small amount of hand sanitizer can cause alcohol poisoning in children. Kids should use sanitizer only with adult supervision. Poison Help: **1 800 222 1222**.²
From a dad of four boys: Healthy habits at home are part of running your family well.

Sources

1. CDC, About Handwashing (Feb 16, 2024): [cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/index.html)
 2. FDA Consumer Update, Safely Using Hand Sanitizer (content current as of Apr 12, 2023): [fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/safely-using-hand-sanitizer](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/safely-using-hand-sanitizer)
- All accessed Oct 14, 2026. Educational only, not medical advice.