

## **PPE: Hand Washing**

### **5-Minute Talk**

#### **Overview of Topic**

Washing our hands seems like a simple procedure. We often do it quickly, without even thinking about it. When working in certain industries, however, everyone must take handwashing more seriously.

Employees must make sure to do a proper and thorough job of handwashing each and every time it is required. If not, disease-causing pathogens can be spread from the hands.

#### **When to Wash Hands**

Employees should wash hands:

- Immediately before starting work, and prior to putting on gloves, plastic sleeves, armguards, aprons, or other PPE.
- After sneezing or coughing into their hand(s).
- After touching any part of their skin, hair, eyes, or mouth.
- After making adjustments to coats, hard hats, hairnets, earplugs, shoes, or other clothing.
- After using a tissue or handkerchief to wipe or blow their nose.
- After eating, drinking, or smoking.
- After using the restroom for any reason.
- After picking up an item from the floor.
- Before and after handling raw meats, poultry, or other raw foods.
- After handling items such as boxes, labels, garbage, brooms, hoses, etc., before returning to work on floor production lines or handling racks of products.
- After each absence from their workstation.



## How to Wash Hands

The way employees wash hands is just as important as when they wash them. If hands are not washed completely clean, employees may still spread contamination. Handwashing techniques should follow these steps:

1. Turn water on to the warmest temperature that is tolerable.
2. Use an adequate amount of the soap or sanitizer provided at all hand-washing stations.
3. Scrub vigorously, making sure that the soapsuds cover and clean every part of the hands.
4. Make sure to clean the webbing between fingers, where dirt and germs can hide in the folds.
5. Clean under and around fingernails, scraping any dirt out from under them. Use a nail brush if one is available.
6. Rinse hands thoroughly, using the same warm water, making sure that all traces of soap are completely rinsed from the hands.
7. Use disposable, single-use paper towels and pat the skin dry rather than rubbing to avoid chapping and cracking. Throw paper towels in the appropriate trash receptacle.

## The Double-Wash Method

Some employers specify the use of the “double-wash” method to help reduce bacteria contamination. This simply means washing the hands twice, using the seven steps described.

## Hand Sanitizers

Sanitizing hand dips may be used following hand washing. If hand sanitizing dips are provided, explain their proper use to the employees.

## Training Tips

- Before training, review the overview and handout material. Gather any props you will use for the training.
- During training, demonstrate the proper method for washing of hands, including the use of a fingernail brush. Explain why paper towels prevents contamination, and explain any additional hygiene steps your employer requires.
- Allow time for employees to ask questions. Remember to have attendees sign the attendance sheet.

## Where To Go For More Information

4 CFR 416.5—Employee Hygiene

29 CFR 1910.141—Sanitation

