

## Hand washing and hygiene

### Why should I wash my hands?

Washing your hands is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses. Also it gets rid of germs you pick up from other people or surfaces you touch and from the animals you come in contact with. Teach your children how to wash and dry their hands properly and this will help to keep them well.

### When should I wash my hands?

- After you have been to the toilet
- Before you have anything to eat
- Before you prepare food or a meal
- After stroking or touching your pets or other animals
- After changing a nappy or holding a baby
- After handling animals, their toys, leashes or waste
- After touching something that could be dirty (such as rubbish bins, cleaning cloth, drain or soil)
- Whenever your hands feel or look dirty.

### How to wash your hands - step by step

1. Wash your hands under clean running water
2. Rub soap on your hands and wash for 20 seconds and do the following:
  - rub hands together until the soap makes bubbles
  - rub both sides of both hands and
  - in between fingers and thumbs and
  - round and round both hands
3. Rinse all the soap off under clean running water
4. Dry your hands all over for 20 seconds using paper towels or if at home a clean dry towel. Dry towels are better than electric hand dryers, it is important to make sure the hands are really dry.

### Hand sanitisers

Hand sanitisers can be used to clean hands when you are not able to use soap, water, and a towel to dry them well. Hand sanitisers do not work as well as good hand washing and drying for removing germs. When using a hand sanitiser keep rubbing your hands together until the gel has completely dried.

*For further information contact the Auckland Regional Public Health Service on 09 623 4600*