

## CLEAN HANDS CAN SAVE LIVES



You're in good hands. With this slogan the Federal Public Service of Public Health, Safety of the Food Chain and the Environment, together with the Federal Platform for Hospital Hygiene, organized its campaign for a correct hand hygiene for the fifth time this year. This way they want to encourage the use of correct hand hygiene in caring facilities, to lower the hospital infections and save lives. Even though not all healthcare infections can be avoided, an important part of it could be avoided thanks to adjusted measures. Hand hygiene is crucial in this. From

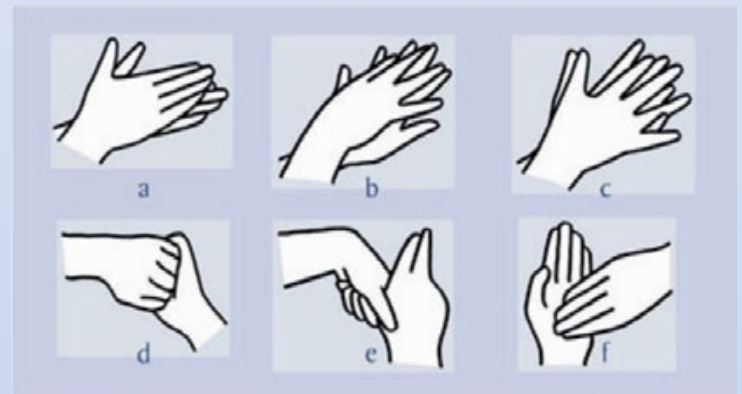
research it appears that infectious diseases and viruses are usually spread by hands. No less than three quarters of all infections are transmitted by hand.

Especially people who are already weaker and sick risk infections due to lack of hand hygiene. Because they need taking care of, they come into direct contact with the hands of their caregivers. On top of that they also often have a lowered resistance, which is why their body is less capable of fighting possible infections. Both the risks and the consequences are a bigger problem for weaker people than healthy ones.

Yet hand hygiene isn't only important in the caregiving environment. Our hands come into contact with a whole number of things every day: money, door handles, a keyboard, the elevator button, the toilet, the dog, ... The list is endless. That way bacteria end up on our hands and through our hands they're spread. Viruses such as the flu can also be spread by our hands. However research shows that a lot of people aren't too bothered with hand hygiene. 31% of men and 17% of women don't wash their hands after going to the bathroom. And 42% doesn't find it necessary after touching a pet. That way bacteria have it easy to get into our food through our hands and cause diverse discomforts and diseases.

Most people are not or barely aware of the fact that there's a connection between a lack of hygiene and food related illnesses. Food can be contaminated by our infected hands among other things. If we eat such contaminated food, the bacteria will move through the stomach towards the intestines. There they attach themselves to the cells of the intestines' inside, start to multiply and can cause diseases.

A good hand hygiene is the way to discourage spreading bacteria. So wash your hands before preparing or eating food, after going to the bathroom, after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, and when your hands are visibly dirty. Remember to also wash your hands when you've been to a place where a lot of people pass by, such as public transportation. And don't forget to wash the children's hands regularly and do so thoroughly, and teach them the importance of good hand hygiene.



The best way to wash your hands is:

- Wash your hands at least 15 seconds underneath streaming water.
- Use soap.
- Rub the soap across the entire hand, between the fingers and underneath the nails as well. (see picture)
- Rinse your hands well.
- Dry your hands on a clean, dry towel or on a paper disposable towel.

Clean hands can prevent a whole lot of discomforts, and sometimes even save lives. A small effort with a great result!

Translation: **Sara De Roy**