Handwashing
An Ounce of Prevention Keeps the Germs Away

Staying healthy is important to you and your entire family. Follow these easy, low-cost steps to help stop many infectious diseases before they happen.

HOW TO WASH

- Wet your hands and apply liquid, bar, or powder soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces. Be sure to clean between the fingers and around the nails.
- Continue for 20 seconds! It takes that long for the soap and scrubbing action to dislodge and remove stubborn germs. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" all the way through twice!
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- If possible, use your paper towel or elbow to turn off the faucet. This will help avoid re-exposure to germs on the handle.

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN

When to Wash

- Before and after eating.
- Before, during, and after handling or preparing food.
- After contact with blood or body fluids (like vomit, nasal secretions, or saliva). This means washing after you blow your nose!
- Before and after changing a diaper.
- After you use the bathroom.
- After handling animals, their toys, leashes, or waste.
- After touching something that could be contaminated (such as a trash can, cleaning cloth, drain, or soil).
- Before and after taking care of (*dressing*) a wound, giving medicine or inserting contact lenses.
- More often when someone in your home is sick.
- Whenever they become soiled.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based wipe or hand gel! Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses. Cleaning your hands gets rid of germs you pick up:

- From other people.
- From the surfaces you touch.
- From the animals you come in contact with.

This information is courtesy of the CDC.

Document Released: 08/08/2006 Document Re-Released: 10/15/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.