Hand Washing

Why is hand washing so important?
The best way to prevent the spread of germs is to
keep your hands clean either with an alcohol-
based hand sanitizer or soap and water. Use the
instructions at right to thoroughly clean your hands.

When should I wash my hands?
You should clean your hands:
• When you touch objects and surfaces in a hospital
  or other room where someone has been ill
• Before entering a hospital room
• Before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
• After blowing your nose or sneezing
• Before eating
• After using the bathroom
• Before and after changing wound dressings
  or bandages
• When your hands look or feel dirty
Visitors to your hospital room or caregivers at
home should follow these same guidelines.

When should healthcare providers
wash their hands?
If you are in a hospital or other healthcare setting,
your care providers should clean their hands
whenever they enter or leave your exam or hospital
room and whenever they put on or take off
sterile gloves. It is okay to remind your healthcare
providers to clean their hands if you didn’t see
them do it when they came in the room or before
beginning any treatment. Friendly reminders are
always welcome.
Questions for my healthcare providers

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