

preparing for  
**Pandemic Influenza**



Winnipeg Regional  
Health Authority  
Caring for Health

Office régional de la  
santé de Winnipeg  
À l'écoute de notre santé

## **Hand Washing in Schools**

Having clean hands (“hand hygiene”) is a very important way to stop the spread of germs at school. Washing hands (properly and often) using soap and water is the most important thing to do. Sometimes it is not easy or convenient to wash with soap and water. In those situations, hand rubs (hand gels and sanitizers with or without alcohol) can also be used.

### **How To Wash Your Hands**

- Wet your hands with warm water
- Add soap and rub hands together for 15 seconds to create a good lather
- Scrub all over both sides of your hands, between your fingers, and under your fingernails
- Rinse your hands and dry them well

### **When to Wash Your Hands at School**

- Before eating food (lunch or snacks)
- After recesses
- After using the toilet
- After wiping, blowing or touching your nose
- After coughing or sneezing into your hands (it is better to cough or sneeze into your sleeve)

### **Use of Hand Rubs (Hand gels and sanitizers)**

Use of hand rubs by school children has been shown to reduce sickness at school. Hand rubs should NOT be used if dirt can be seen on hands. If dirt can be seen on hands, soap and water must be used - follow the steps of “How To Wash Your Hands”.

Some hand rubs have alcohol in them to kill germs and others don't. In health care settings, alcohol hand rubs are always recommended (with at least 60% alcohol) because many people there are very sick. In other settings such as schools, non-alcohol hand rubs can be an option if preferred for safety reasons. Hand rubs may dry out hands more frequently than soap and water so use of a hand lotion may help prevent drying and cracking of skin.

### **Non-alcohol hand rubs:**

Hand rubs that contain benzalkonium chloride (instead of alcohol) have been shown to be as effective as hand rubs that contain alcohol in reducing the amount of sickness in school children. Children should not ingest hand gels of any kind.

### **Alcohol hand rubs:**

Children in a school setting should be directly supervised by an adult if hand rubs that contain alcohol are used. Allow hands to dry completely before touching anything, especially hand-to-mouth contact. Hand rubs that contain alcohol may be reserved for children with special medical needs or for special situations with adult supervision provided.