Is it better to clean your hands with soap or hand sanitizer?

December 3, 2019 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that washing the hands with soap and water removes more microbes than hand sanitizers do. However, this assumes proper technique—whether you use soap and water or hand sanitizer, there is a right way.

Good technique includes lots of vigorous rubbing and scrubbing. Clean every part of your hands, including the backs, between the fingers and under the nails. Do this for at least 20 seconds. Click here for complete CDC recommendations for washing hands with soap and water.

No soap or water available? Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Again, apply friction, and be sure to clean every part of your hands. Visit the website for National Handwashing Awareness Week to pick up a few more tips.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/better-clean-hands-soap-hand-sanitizer