

HYGIENE AND HEALTH



Why is personal hygiene important?

Good personal hygiene is important for helping keep the body healthy and clean. In this article, we outline the importance of personal hygiene and health. However, we also discuss different types of hygiene, self-care routines, and what may happen if hygiene practices lapse.

What is it?

Good personal hygiene can benefit both physical and mental health. It also involves keeping all parts of the external body clean and healthy. It is important for maintaining both physical and mental health. In people with poor personal hygiene, the body provides an ideal environment for germs to grow, leaving it vulnerable to infection. On a social level, people may avoid a person with poor personal hygiene, resulting in isolation and loneliness.

Types of personal hygiene

There are many types of personal hygiene. However, the following list is a good starting point for someone looking to build a personal hygiene routine:

Dental

Dental hygiene involves more than just having white teeth. A good dental hygiene routine can help prevent gum disease and cavities. It can also prevent bad breath.

Body

Several million sweat glands cover the human body. When bacteria break down sweat, the process creates a smell or body odor. Washing the body will help prevent skin irritation and remove the bacteria that cause body odor. Washing the hair removes oil and keeps a person looking clean and fresh.

Hand washing

Regular hand washing is one of the best ways to avoid spreading communicable diseases.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Trusted Source recommends washing hands at certain times:

- > before, during, and after preparing food
- > before eating food
- > before and after looking after anyone who is vomiting or has diarrhea
- > before and after treating a cut or wound
- > after going to the bathroom
- > after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- > after blowing the nose, coughing, or sneezing
- > after touching garbage or dirty surfaces or objects
- > after handling pets or pet-related items, such as food

Nails

Fingernails may harbor dirt and germs, contributing to the spread of bacteria. It is easier for dirt and germs to collect under longer nails, so keeping them short can help reduce the risk of spreading infections.

How to maintain good personal hygiene

Knowing how to maintain good personal hygiene can make it easier to build a routine; therefore a person should have some basic knowledge of the following types of hygiene:

Dental hygiene

For a healthy mouth and smile, the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends brushing the teeth for 2 minutes at least twice a day — once before breakfast and once before bed.

People should use an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste and replace the toothbrush every 3–4 months. The ADA also advises people to floss daily.

[Learn more about good dental hygiene here.](#)

Hand washing

The CDC outlines five simple steps for effective hand washing:

1.
 - A. Wet the hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 - B. Lather the hands by rubbing them with soap, remembering to reach the backs of the hands, between the fingers, and under the nails.
 - C. Scrub the hands for at least 20 seconds, which a person can time by humming the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
 - D. Rinse the hands well under clean, running water.
 - E. Dry the hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

[Learn more about proper hand washing here.](#)

Body

It is advisable to shower or bathe daily, using soap and water to rinse away dead skin cells, oil, and bacteria. People can pay special attention to areas that accumulate more sweat, such as the armpits, between the toes, and the groin area. If necessary, washing the hair with shampoo should occur at least once a week. Applying deodorant when fully dry can help prevent body odors.

Nails

Using sanitized tools to trim the nails and keep them short is one of the best ways to ensure that no dirt can collect underneath them. In addition, scrubbing the underside of the nails with a nail brush can form part of a person’s hand-washing routine.

Menstrual and genital hygiene

Changing sanitary products regularly and washing your hands before and after changing tampons, pads, or other sanitary products is important. As vaginas are self-cleaning, using soap to clean the vagina can cause an imbalance of its natural bacteria and lead to infections. The vulva (the external part of the vagina) should only need cleaning once a day using mild soap and water. People with an uncircumcised penis can clean it by gently pulling back the foreskin and washing it with warm water or soap.

Factors that can negatively impact hygiene

Poverty and lack of access to clean water can both have a detrimental effect on a person's hygiene. A person's mental health can also affect how they take care of themselves. People with certain conditions, such as a psychotic disorder, severe depression, or drug or alcohol use disorder, may find it challenging to maintain a personal hygiene routine.

Conditions that poor personal hygiene can signal

While personal hygiene can cause certain health issues, it can also be a side effect for some. For example, people with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia often have poor oral hygiene. In some cases, the inability to maintain a hygiene routine could result from depression. Depressive symptoms, such as reduced energy levels and impaired cognitive function, can make a self-care regimen more difficult to keep up.

Negative effects of poor personal hygiene

Poor hygiene is a sensitive topic, and talking to a person about it can be difficult. As a result, a person with poor personal hygiene could become isolated from others. Poor personal hygiene may also affect the workplace. Companies may be more likely to offer jobs and promotions to individuals who appear to care for their health and presentation. Poor personal hygiene can be particularly problematic in the food industry.

There are also many health implications of having poor personal hygiene, with the CDC listing the following as hygiene-related diseases:

- > athlete's foot

- > body lice

> chronic diarrhea

> tooth decay

> head lice

> hot tub rash

> pinworms

> pubic lice

> scabies

> swimmer's ear

> ringworm

Hygiene routine tips

Helpful tips for creating a hygiene routine include the following:

- **Make it a habit:** With daily practice, a new habit can become a regular part of life. Choose one area to focus on and practice until it becomes second nature.
- **Set reminders:** Using the notes app on a cell phone can be a great way to avoid forgetting any tasks.
- **Use rewards:** A sticker chart can be a brilliant incentive for children to maintain their personal hygiene.
- **Invest in nice toiletries:** Using products that smell good may encourage some people to stick to their personal hygiene routine.

Summary

Keeping the body clean positively affects a person's social life and physical and mental health.

Personal hygiene is simply looking after the body and keeping it clean, which leads to a healthy body and mind.

Courtesy of [Why is personal hygiene important?](#)