

## Do Antibacterial Products Keep People Healthy?

There is a plethora of antibacterial products, including soaps, toothpaste, shampoos and laundry detergent. In the United States the majority of liquid soaps and 30% of bar soaps are advertised as antibacterial. Substances that have antibacterial properties have been incorporated into plastic when manufacturing toilet seats and children's toys, as well as being woven into socks and underwear. Triclosan is the most commonly used chemical that has antibacterial properties. The products that contain these chemicals are advertised as better for a person's health.

There is little doubt that these chemicals do, in fact, kill bacteria, but the important question is, do these products keep people healthier?

Studies have shown that antibacterial products, including soaps, are not necessary for adequate removal of bacteria. Remember, also, that some illnesses, including the common cold, are viral and thus not affected by antibacterial products.

What really has an impact is frequent and thorough handwashing.

Bottom Line: At home and in food service environments, antibacterial soaps are not necessary.

At home: It is certain that you can reduce the risk of spreading bacterial infections by thorough washing of your hands with soap and warm water.

At food service establishments: Employees are to wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before starting work, after visiting the toilet, and as often as may be necessary to remove soil and contamination.

Make Thorough Handwashing a Habit:

- Wash hands often with warm, running water and soap before preparing foods and especially after handling raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Scrub backs of hands, wrist, and between fingers, under and around fingernails, for 15-20 seconds. Rinse well.
- Dry hands with disposable paper towels or CLEAN towels.