It's that time of year again! Flu season has arrived. Along with getting the flu shot, one of the best things you can do to prevent getting the flu is washing your hands regularly and thoroughly. Many diseases are spread by not washing hands properly with soap and clean, running water. If soap is not available, an alcohol based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol should be used. However, keep in mind that hand sanitizer should not be used when hands are visibly dirty.

Always remember to wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

Knowing how to wash your hands the correct way is just as important as knowing when to wash. First, wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails. Continue rubbing your hands for at least twenty seconds. Singing the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice is a good way to make sure you are taking enough time. Next, rinse your hands well under running water. Finally, dry your hands using a clean towel. When in a public restroom, use a dry paper towel to turn off faucets and when touching bathroom door handles.

When using hand sanitizers, apply the product to the palm of one hand and rub hands together. Make sure you rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. Hand sanitizers are convenient when soap and water are not available but, they do not eliminate all types of germs and do not remove dirt. Therefore, sanitizers should not be used to replace proper hand washing with soap and water.