

Antibacterial Soaps

Why we care

In 2016 the Food and Drug Administration banned 19 chemicals from antibacterial soaps because the manufacturers hadn't proven that those ingredients were safe for daily use over a long period of time. But many Americans want to be germ-free, so the antibacterial label still has appeal. Liquid soap manufacturers have substituted three other chemicals that are as yet unapproved by the FDA, and health officials worry these antibacterials will have the same problems as the banned chemicals. Why take any risk when regular soap is just as effective? "There's no data demonstrating that these drugs provide additional protection from diseases and infections. Using these products might give people a false sense of security," FDA says.

Simple, positive steps

- Washing hands is the most effective way of avoiding germs. Wash with soap and running water for about 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday).
- Commercial germ-killing products are not needed for regular household cleaning either. Regular soap, soda, and vinegar are adequate cleaners.
- Household items that do require special attention are cutting boards, kitchen sponges, and dishrags. Be sure to use separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables and wash with hot water and soap. Microwave sponges for 2 minutes or boil in water for 3 minutes. Launder dishrags weekly in hot water.

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