



35. Handwashing in a highly infectious epidemic

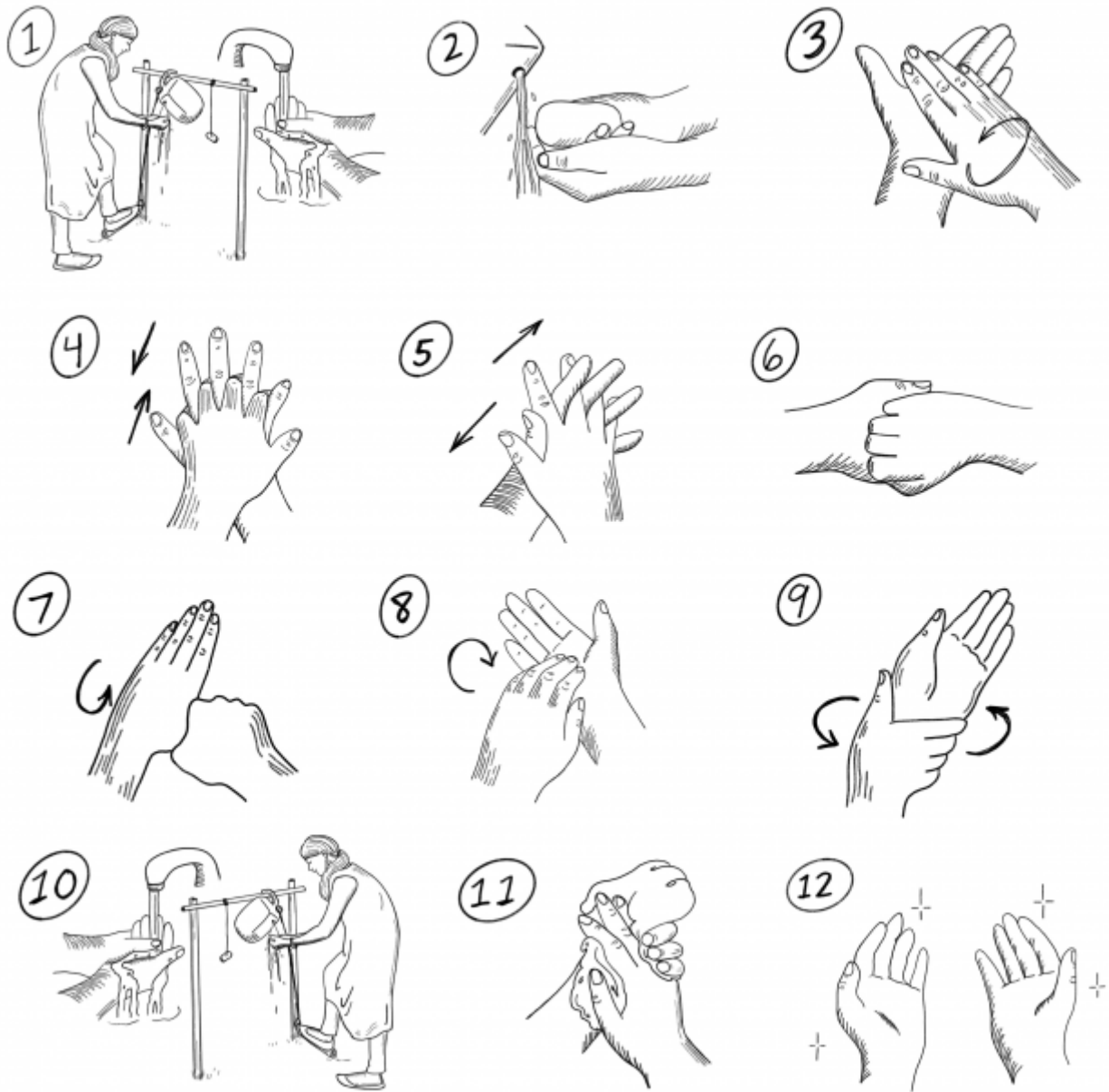
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Overview

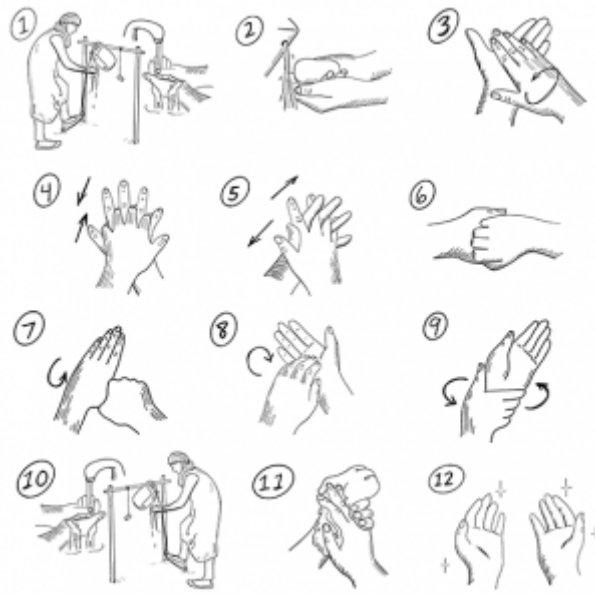
- If you are not extremely careful, you are likely to fall sick in certain epidemics when you try to help people. (See Action tools [Volunteer protection and safety](#) and [Personal protection equipment \(PPE\) for highly infectious diseases](#) on volunteer protection and using PPE.)
- Handwashing is a vital source of protection when you deal with Ebola, Marburg fever, Lassa fever, plague, MERS and monkeypox.

Why is handwashing important and why is handwashing different in epidemics?

- Highly infectious germs are spread very easily through body fluids and certain diseases can even be transmitted via the bodies of people who are dead.
- Very vigorous and comprehensive handwashing is needed in such cases.
- When working in such epidemics, it is critical to use all available forms of protection. (See Action tools [Volunteer protection and safety](#) and [Personal protection equipment \(PPE\) for highly infectious diseases](#) on volunteer protection and using personal protection equipment.)
- When you wash your hands during an epidemic, to eliminate all the germs on your hands you need to:
 - Use soap or an alcohol-based disinfectant.
 - Wash your hands as usual.
 - Then wash thoroughly between your fingers.
 - Scrub the tips of the fingers of the two hands together.
 - Wash each of your thumbs with the other hand.
 - Scrub the tips of the fingers of each hand on the palm of the other hand.
 - (See instructions on the other side of this card.)
- During an epidemic (of a highly infectious disease, or another disease such as diarrhoea or cholera, or a respiratory infection), it is a good idea to use this handwashing method every time you have touched something that can pass on an infection.



Community messages



10. Steps for washing hands in epidemics