

Hygiene with limited water

ACTION CHECKLIST

Reserve safe water for drinking, food, medicines and essential hygiene. Wash hands with safe water and soap before food preparation and after toilet or waste handling. Keep clean and dirty tasks separate. Sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol helps when hands are not visibly dirty; it does not remove chemicals or replace washing dirty hands.

[] Set up a clean station

Put safe water, soap and a clean towel or air-drying arrangement near food and care tasks. Use a container that does not require everyone to dip dirty hands into the supply.

[] Prioritise key washing times

Wash after toilet and waste handling, before eating or preparing food and before wound or infant care. Do not use suspected chemically contaminated water on skin.

[] Use sanitiser appropriately

Use at least 60% alcohol sanitiser when soap and safe water are unavailable and hands are not visibly dirty. Keep it away from flames and children.

[] Separate waste and food

Store rubbish and toilet waste away from water, food and sleeping areas. Clean high-contact surfaces using product instructions without mixing chemicals.

[] Plan personal care

Include menstrual supplies, nappies, necessary skin care and clean clothing. Keep wounds clean and covered; worsening redness, pain or fever needs medical assessment.

WATCH FOR

Surface disinfectant is not drinking-water treatment. Do not apply household bleach to skin or mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners.

IF HELP IS UNAVAILABLE

Use the smallest workable clean-water station and protect it from contamination. Reduce nonessential washing before cutting drinking water or essential handwashing.

Updated 2026-10-02 | Civilian educational guidance. Seek qualified help when reachable and safe; do not delay immediate protective action.

Full guide: <https://ospreyzero.com/guides/emergency-hygiene/>

CDC · Personal hygiene during an emergency

CDC · Emergency water