



Weekly Safety Meeting

Show Me the Science - Why Wash Your Hands?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water.

How Germs Get onto Hands and Make People Sick

Feces (poop) from people or animals is an important source of germs like Salmonella, E. coli 0157, and norovirus that cause diarrhea, and it can spread some respiratory infections like adenovirus and hand-foot-mouth disease. These kinds of germs can get onto hands after people use the toilet or change a diaper, but also in less obvious ways, like after handling raw meats that have invisible amounts of animal poop on them. A single gram of human feces, which is about the weight of a paper clip, can contain one trillion germs. Germs can also get onto hands if people touch any object that has germs on it because someone coughed or sneezed on it, or because it was touched by some other contaminated object. When these germs get onto hands and are not washed off, they can be passed from person to person and make people sick.

Washing Hands Prevents Illnesses and Spread of Infections to Others

Handwashing with soap removes germs from hands and thus can prevent infections.

People frequently touch their eyes, nose, and mouth without even realizing it. Germs can get into the body through the eyes, nose and mouth and make us sick.

Germs from unwashed hands can get into foods and drinks while people prepare or consume them. Germs can multiply in some types of foods or drinks, under certain conditions, and make people sick.

Germs from unwashed hands can be transferred to other objects, like handrails, tabletops, or toys, and then transferred to another person's hands.

Removing germs through handwashing therefore helps prevent diarrhea and respiratory infections and may even help prevent skin and eye infections.

Teaching people about handwashing helps them and their communities stay healthy. Handwashing education in the community:

- Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23-40%;
- Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58%;
- Reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 16-21%; and

- Reduces absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness in schoolchildren by 29-57%.

Washing hands with soap could protect about 1 out of every 3 young children who get sick with diarrhea and almost 1 out of 5 young children with respiratory infections like pneumonia.

Although people around the world clean their hands with water, very few use soap to wash their hands. Washing hands with soap removes germs much more effectively.

Estimated global rates of handwashing after using the toilet are only 19%.

Lastly, hand washing helps battle the rise in antibiotic resistance because the reduction in the amount of antibiotics people use reduces the likelihood of antibiotic resistance developing.

STAY CLEAN, STAY HEALTHY! SIMPLY WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP!

