

HANDWASHING IS KEY TO INFECTION CONTROL

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When growing up I'm sure most people heard from their Mothers, "Wash your hands." Mom did know best. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention), "The most important thing that you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands." Dr. Julie Gerberding of the CDC states, "In the home, it can prevent infectious diseases such as diarrhea and hepatitis A from spreading from family member to family member and, sometimes, throughout the community." In addition, according to the ISDH (Indiana State Department of Health), unwashed or poorly washed hands are a very common way of spreading colds, flu, ear infections, strep throat and other intestinal problems. Germs and viruses are passed by such routine things as handling food, touching doorknobs, using other peoples pens, shaking hands and telephone receivers. Hopefully after reading these tips everyone will wash their hands more vigilantly.

When To Wash Your Hands:

- 1. After using the bathroom or changing a diaper. The CDC states, "It is estimated that 1 out of 3 people do not wash their hands after using the restroom."**
- 2. After blowing nose, sneezing or coughing.**
- 3. Before eating.**
- 4. Before, during and after your prepare food.**
- 5. After handling uncooked meat. According to Home Food Safety, "Nearly ½ of all cases of foodborn illnesses could be eliminated if people would wash their hands more often when preparing food." Remember to wash hands between tasks, such as handling raw meats then cutting fresh vegetables.**
- 6. After taking out the trash.**
- 7. After handling money.**
- 8. After playing with a pet, especially reptiles, iguanas, turtles and snakes.**
- 9. After handling animal waste.**
- 10. When your hands are visibly dirty.**
- 11. More frequently when someone in your home is sick.**

According to the CDC, "One of the most common ways people catch colds is by rubbing their nose or their eyes after their hands have been contaminated with the cold virus."

2 Methods to Properly Cleanse Your Hands:

1. Use hot or warm running water. Lather hands with soap. Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds. Wash the back of hands, between fingers and under fingernails. Rinse well with warm water. Pat hands dry, beginning at the wrist and moving down. Turn off the water, using a paper towel. If using a public restroom dispense the paper towel, before washing your hands.

2. Use hand sanitizer. Spread the sanitizer thoroughly by briskly rubbing hands together until dry. This should take approximately 15 seconds. The amount of sanitizer needed varies by product. If hands are visibly soiled use soap and water vs. hand sanitizer.

Parents should teach their children the proper way to wash their hands. Children should see their parents and other care givers washing their hands frequently. Consumers need to let restaurants, day cares and other public places know they are concerned about personal hygiene and infection control. Consumers should report instances of poor infection control to the proper persons, such as the manager of a restaurant.

According to the CDC, "Washing your hands regularly can certainly save a lot on medical bills. Because it costs less than a penny, you could say that this penny's worth of prevention can save you a \$50.00 visit to the doctor."

Research for this article was obtained from the CDC at www.cdc.gov, ISDH at www.in.gov/isdh and Home Food Safety at www.homefoodsafety.org.