

HANDWASHING IS KEY TO INFECTION CONTROL

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Flu season is upon us, and besides getting a flu vaccine the other key element is handwashing. The ISDH states, 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 people's pens, shaking hands and using someone's phone. Hopefully after reading these tips everyone will wash their hands more vigilantly.

When is a person contagious with the flu?

This is a key reason you need to wash your hands, as persons may be able to infect others from the day before they start showing symptoms until seven days later.

How long should a person stay home if they have the flu?

The CDC recommends people with the flu stay at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever reducing medications.

How can I avoid getting a cold or the flu, or passing it along to someone else?

Keep your hands clean. Carry alcohol based hand sanitizer with you and use it.

Cough/sneeze into your elbow. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Don't eat, drink or smoke after others. Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if they have fever, cough and a sore throat. Get plenty of sleep, exercise, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat well balanced meals.

How often should I wash my hands?

- 1. After using the bathroom or changing a diaper.**
- 2. After blowing nose, sneezing or coughing.**
- 3. Before eating. Before, during and after your prepare food.**
- 4. After taking out the trash.**
- 5. After handling money.**
- 6. After playing with a pet, especially reptiles, iguanas, turtles and snakes.**
- 7. After handling animal waste.**
- 8. When your hands are visibly dirty.**
- 9. More frequently when someone in your home is sick.**

How do I properly wash my hands?

Use warm running water and lather hands with soap. Rub hands together at least 15 seconds. Wash the back of hands, between fingers and under fingernails, and rinse well with warm water. Pat hands dry. Turn off the water, using a paper towel. If using a public restroom dispense the paper towel, before washing your hands. If your hands are visibly soiled use soap and water vs. hand sanitizer.

Use hand sanitizer. Spread the sanitizer thoroughly by briskly rubbing hands together

until dry, which is approximately 15 seconds. The amount of sanitizer needed varies by product.

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.

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 this penny's worth of prevention can save you a \$100.00 visit to the doctor."

Research for this article was obtained from the CDC at www.cdc.gov and the ISDH at www.in.gov/isdh.