

## **HAND WASHING IS KEY TO CONTROLLING WORKPLACE GERMS**

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**If I asked you to think of the germiest jobs, I would probably get the following responses: health care professionals, garbage collectors, sewage plant workers or other similar answers. According to a report I recently heard on 106.9 the germiest jobs are actually teachers, bank employees and disc jockeys. What do these three jobs have in common? These workers all use something that contains 21,000 germs per square inch, a desk. Even germier is an office phone, with more than 25,000 germs per square inch. This is in comparison to a restroom toilet seat which contains only 49 germs per square inch.**

**When someone is infected with a cold or flu, the surfaces they touch throughout the day become germ transfer points, with some germs being able to survive on surfaces for up to two hours or longer. A person is able to infect others with the flu the day before symptoms develop. Therefore, you are able to pass on the flu to someone before you even know you are sick. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention), “The most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands.” In addition, according to the ISDH (Indiana State Department of Health) and CDC, unwashed or poorly washed hands are a very common way of spreading colds, flu, ear infections, strep throat, hepatitis A, meningitis and intestinal problems. Germs and viruses are spread by handling food, microwave door handles, coffeepots, cafeteria table, touching doorknobs, using other peoples pens, staplers, telephone receivers, copy machines, desks, computer keyboards and mice, shaking hands and the list goes on and on. Hopefully after reading these tips, everyone will wash their hands more vigilantly.**

**A recent survey by the American Society for Microbiology revealed many people are not washing their hands. Americans wash their hands 83% of the time after using the restroom, 77% of the time before handling food, 32% of the time after coughing or sneezing, and only 21% of the time after handling money.**

### **When to Wash Your Hands:**

- 1. After using the restroom.**
- 2. After blowing nose, sneezing or coughing.**
- 3. Before and after eating.**
- 4. After using your co-worker’s keyboard or other office tools.**
- 5. After using shared office equipment like faxes, phones, copiers, etc.**
- 6. After handling money.**
- 7. Before and after a meet and greet activity in your office.**
- 8. When your hands are visibly dirty.**
- 9. More frequently when someone in your office 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.**

**Research for this article was obtained from the CDC at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), ISDH at [www.in.gov/isdh](http://www.in.gov/isdh).**