



Cooperative Extension Service

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Germ City

Clean Hands—Healthy People

Special News for Parents and Staff 2003

Good Health....in 30 Seconds

- **Wet Hands Using Warm, Running Water**
- **Use Soap and Scrub for 20 seconds. Practice by singing Row, Row, Row Your Boat twice or counting slowly to 20.**
- **Rinse with Warm, Running Water**
- **Dry with a Paper Towel**
- **Use the Towel to Turn Off the Faucet and Open the Bathroom Door**

Clean Hands—Healthy Children—Healthy People

It's happening in schools, on cruise ships, in restaurants, in health care settings, and in your home. Every year, thousands of Americans become ill - severe vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, abdominal pain, and nausea. It seems to spread like a wild fire through schools with symptoms lasting several days. Often called the "24-hour" flu, this illness is the second most likely infection in America after the common cold.

It's called Norwalk or Norwalk Like Virus. Humans are the only known hosts. People get Norwalk virus infection by swallowing food or water that has been contami-

nated with microscopic viral particles from the stool of an infected person. That's how the virus is most commonly spread from one person to another.

This illness spreads rapidly from person to person when hands are not washed after toileting. Any surface the ill person touches like door knobs, faucet handles or computer keyboards may be contaminated. When a healthy person touches the same surface, they can easily carry the virus to the food and water they consume. This is especially true when people don't take time to wash their hands prior to

preparing food or eating.

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to wash your hands frequently and well: Especially before preparing food, eating meals, and snacks. This simple step will make a difference in your health and the health of your family and friends. Clean Hands means Healthy Children and Healthy People!



Wash Your Hands:

- Before you eat
- Before preparing food
- After using the bathroom
- After coughing /sneezing
- After playing with pets
- After changing diapers
- After carrying the garbage or trash

Germ City Visits Schools, Fairs, and Festivals

The Germ City: Clean Hands, Healthy People Program was developed by Washington State University Cooperative Extension. Educators and volunteers in West Virginia, Alabama, Hawaii, Idaho, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington are sharing the hand

washing message of Germ City with children in schools and during fairs and festivals.

Here's How Germ City Works: Children and adults apply a black light sensitive lotion to their hands and enter a tunnel equipped with black lights, seeing pretend

germs. After initial observation, participants wash their hands normally, re-visit Germ City, and assess their effectiveness. It's "hands-on". Everyone has an opportunity to learn about the importance of frequent, effective hand washing and see results.

The Costs of Hand Hygiene

It's a \$9 Billion Dollar problem in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, that's the annual cost for the treatment of food borne illnesses caused by personal control hygiene factors including poor hand washing practices. The Centers for Disease Control link poor hand sanitation to 34% of the documented cases of food borne illness in the US. That's 9.3 million illnesses each and every year in the United States that could be prevented with frequent, effective hand washing.

Hand washing is a key, often overlooked behavior that is important for food safety, disease prevention, and personal health. Yet, many of us underestimate the potential seriousness of illness and its' correlation with hand washing practices. In a study by the Food and Drug Administration, only 2/3rds of those questioned reported they used safe food practices that included hand washing, cross contamination prevention, and thorough cooking of meat and poultry. Most people—including chil-

dren and adults do not wash their hands as often or as well as needed.

When asked "Why" they don't take time to wash when they know it is important, adults and children say similar things:

- It takes too long
- Doesn't make a difference
- My hands are clean
- My hands aren't dirty
- I'm too busy
- There are more important things to do

"Hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spreading of infection."

Centers for Disease Control—Atlanta, GA

It's a Little Dirty Secret

Several studies have shown that adults fail to wash their hands frequently and effectively. In 2000, the American Society for Microbiology asked 1,021 people, "Do you always wash your hands after using the bathroom?" 95% responded they did. When 7,836 adults were observed in a subsequent follow-up study in public restrooms in five major metropol-

itan areas, only 68% even placed their hands under running water prior to leaving the restroom.

A 1999 study conducted in 82 cities in North America by Audits International showed at least one critical violation that could lead to food borne illness occurred in 69% of the households. The most frequently observed critical violations were cross contamination(31%), im-

proper cooling of leftovers (29%), and neglected hand washing (29%).

Take time today and make plans to encourage good hand washing in your home.



Children's Health Improved with Hand Washing

Children stay healthy when they wash their hands effectively and frequently. In a study done in a Detroit, MI school, children heard about the importance of hand washing. Half of the students (305) were asked to wash their hands four times each school day at planned times. Children washing at scheduled times had 24% fewer sick days due to

respiratory illness and 51% fewer days lost because of stomach upset than did children in the classroom without the scheduled washing.

Encourage your children to wash their hands frequently during the school day and at home.

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