

National Handwashing Awareness Week

December 2-8, 2018

Personal hygiene begins and ends with our hands. And though we're taught as youngsters to wash our hands before dinner, it's important to remember that germs don't care what time of day it is. **Clean hands prevent sickness.** So it's especially important to learn the basics about hand hygiene so that you, too, can become a champion hand washer! Let's examine some handy (see what we did there?) tips and info in honor of National Handwashing Awareness Week, which takes place each year during the first week of December.

National Handwashing Awareness Week Activities

1. Do it right

Experts recommend washing your hands with soap and clean water for **at least 20 seconds**. Be sure to get a good lather going and clean the back of the hands, between the fingers and under the nails. Dry them using a clean towel. There is a lot of science behind these recommendations, so be sure to follow them each time you wash your hands.

2. Memorize the five steps

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls hand washing "a do-it-yourself vaccine" and suggests remembering five easy steps: **Wet, lather, scrub, rinse, dry.**

3. Learn the Four Principles of Hand Awareness

Endorsed by the American Medical Association and American Academy of Family Physicians, the four principles are: **1) Wash your hands when they are dirty and before eating; 2) Do not cough into hands; 3) Do not sneeze into hands; and 4) Don't put your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth.**

5 Super Clean Facts About Hand Hygiene

1. Handwashing equals happiness

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **handwashing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related illnesses and 1 in 5 infections, including the flu.**

2. Beware the twin killers for kids

About **1.4 million children** under age 5 **die from diarrheal diseases and pneumonia** — the two most deadly afflictions for children worldwide.

3. The dirty secret of public restrooms

The CDC also reports that **only 31 percent of men and 65 percent of women** washed their hands after using a public restroom.

4. Hand wash your way to health

Using antibiotics creates antibiotic resistance. Handwashing prevents many sicknesses, so people need less antibiotics. Therefore, less antibiotic resistance.

5. Sneezes are mini hurricanes

A **typical human sneeze** exits the body at about 200 miles per hour and **emits around 40,000 droplets into the air.**

Why We Love National Handwashing Awareness Week

A. Healthy hands are happy hands

And happy hands make for happy and healthy homes.

B. It helps prevent the spread of germs

Think of how many different things we touch during the course of an average day. Now imagine how many of those things were touched by other people's hands. Yuck! Wash your hands to prevent the spread of dangerous microbes.

C. Let's shake on it

Finally, we love National Handwashing Awareness Week because it reminds everybody — especially doctors and those who prepare the food we eat — to take cleanliness and hygiene seriously.