Wash Your Hands – Give Yourself a Hand Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

We assume everyone knows how to wash their hands, but many workers don't realize how important hand washing and skin care can be in the prevention of disease. Proper skin care and hand protection help keep workers productive and on the job.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

GERMS AND UNWASHED HANDS

- People frequently touch their eyes, nose, and mouth without even realizing it. Germs can get into the body through the eyes, nose and mouth and make us sick.
- Germs from unwashed hands can get into foods and drinks while people prepare or consume them. Germs can multiply in some types of foods or drinks, under certain conditions, and make people sick.
- Germs from unwashed hands can be transferred to other objects, like handrails, table tops, or toys, and then transferred to another person's hands.

ILLNESS, SICKNESS CAUSED BY LACK OF AND IMPROPER HAND WASHING

Serious Respiratory Illness. If you don't wash your hands, you're going to get sick. You can get the common cold. But the risks are much more severe than that. Covid-19, the flu, pneumonia, adenovirus, and even hand, foot, and mouth disease are all respiratory illnesses you can develop from neglecting to wash your hands.

Diarrhea. Diarrhea-related illnesses can strike easily in people who don't wash their hands. Bacteria and viruses from feces (poop) can cause various diarrhea-related illnesses, including

salmonella, norovirus, and E. coli 0157.

Food Poisoning – Cross-Contamination. When you're cooking frequent washing as essential to prevent cross-contamination. Foods such as raw meat, vegetables with dirt on them, or eggs can harbor potentially harmful bacteria that can make you sick if not handled correctly.

Infect Other People. When you touch a doorknob after touching your eyes, mouth, nose, or face, you're putting whoever touches it after you at risk of picking up your germs. When you touch that doorknob, you're also picking up the germs of everyone who touched it before you.

Put People with Weak Immune Systems at Risk. By not washing your hands after going to the bathroom, or touching potentially contaminated foods, you can create huge complications for those around you who have weaker immune systems.

Contribute To Antibiotic Resistance. Fewer infections mean less widespread antibiotic treatment, and the overuse of antibiotics is the leading cause of antibiotic resistance. Washing your hands can also prevent the spread of difficult-to-treat illnesses from germs that have already become resistant to antibiotics.

Too Much Reliance on Hand Sanitizer. It's not just the soap that kills the pathogens on your hands. The additional mechanical action of lathering and the friction of rubbing your hands together and washing away the germs and debris is what makes handwashing more effective.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

HAND HYGIENE PROTECTION AT WORK

Washing hands while at work is not only part of personal hand hygiene, but it also helps to minimize the spread of diseases that come with unwashed hands. Washing hands is an effective way to remove any germs, dirt, and other messes from your hands, and prevents you from spreading these to other surfaces.

WHEN TO WASH YOUR HANDS AT WORK

There is no limit to how many times you should wash up at work. However, don’t wait until your hands are visibly dirty before you wash up. Clean hands prevent the spread of germs and viruses like Covid-19.

Wash Your Hands at Work When:

- As soon as you get to work.
- Before and after eating or preparing food
- After using the restroom
- After handling trash
- Between meetings
- When using shared office equipment like copiers
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- Whenever your hands are dirty
- After shaking hands with someone

How to Wash Your Hands Properly

Hand washing takes at least 20-30 seconds to get rid of the majority of bacteria and viruses on hands.

1. Wet hands with clean, running water.
2. Wash hands with antibacterial soap, keeping the liquid soap all over the surface of your hands.
3. Rub your palms together to evenly wash hands with the antibacterial soap.
4. Lather the back of your hands, making sure to get between the fingers and through the knuckles.
5. Rub your knuckles together to scrub them clean.
6. Don’t forget to clean your thumbs as well!
7. Go over your fingers, knuckles, palms, and thumb to scrub any parts you may have missed.
8. Rinse your hands, and dry them with clean paper towels, or shake off the excess water and air dry if no clean towel is available to you.
9. At this point, you may use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to complete hand disinfection or forego the hand sanitizer

for regular cleaning. The antibacterial hand soap should have removed traces of microorganisms on your skin.

BEST TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN AND GERM-FREE

- Carry with you a small bottle of liquid soap for hand washing, especially if your office does not provide soap.
- Consider making hand sanitizers a part of your work bag, as there would be times when hand washing would be inconvenient, or if there is no soap and water available around.
- Most soaps on the market are effective in killing germs, so using soap meant for sensitive skin does not make much of a difference as long as you wash your hands with soap.
- Avoid touching suspicious surfaces and clean any food particles from your desk.

FINAL WORD

Many people now understand that hand hygiene is an essential way of protecting themselves from person-to-person transmission via hand contact and contaminated surfaces.