



HSE ALERT # 156

HAND HYGIENE

Hand washing, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Good hand washing technique can significantly reduce the spread of infectious diseases among both children and adults. Just one in three washes after sneezing or coughing. Not even one in five washes after handling money, a major carrier of disease germs.

WHAT TYPES OF DISEASE CAN HAND WASHING PREVENT?

- Diseases spread through fecal-oral transmission.
- Diseases spread through indirect contact with respiratory secretions. Microorganisms which may be transmitted through this route include influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and the common cold. Because these diseases may be spread indirectly by hands contaminated by respiratory discharges of infected people, illness may be avoided by washing hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Diseases may also be spread when hands are contaminated with urine, saliva or other moist body substances.

FOLLOW THESE FOUR SIMPLE STEPS FOR KEEPING HANDS CLEAN

- Wet your hands with warm running water.
- Add soap, then rub your hands together, making a soapy lather. Do this away from the running water for at least 20 seconds. Wash the front and back of your hands, as well as between your fingers and under your nails.
- Rinse your hands well under running water. Let the water run back into the sink, not down to your elbows.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean towel.

SOME MISTAKES SHOULD BE AVOIDED REGARDING HAND WASHING

- DON'T use a single damp cloth to wash a group of children's hands.
- DON'T use a common hand towel. Always use disposable towels in day care.
- DON'T use sponges or non-disposable cleaning cloths unless you launder them on a regular basis
Remember that germs thrive on moist surfaces!

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN WITH GOOD HAND WASHING TECHNIQUE?

It is important to encourage and help children to wash hands before eating, after playing with pets, using the bathroom, and blowing their noses.

Stay Healthy and Safe

