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Health Department

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Hand Washing "How To"

Why should I wash my hands?

As you likely recall from the spring of 2009 when the H1N1/Swine Flu was spreading, health professionals worldwide stressed the importance of handwashing. Although it may seem simple, it works!

Handwashing is the best way to prevent infection and illness: clean hands prevent infections. Keeping hands clean prevents illness at home, at school, and at work.

How often should I wash my hands?

Wash hands before:

- Preparing food
- Eating

Wash hands after:

- Handling uncooked meat and poultry
- Changing diapers
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Blowing one's nose into a tissue
- Coming in from outdoors
- Using the bathroom.

Is there a correct way to wash my hands?

Yes, there is. You should follow the following steps to be sure you're really scrubbing away the germs:

1. Wet hands with running water.
2. Pump soap into palms.
3. Rub together to make a lather.
4. Scrub hands vigorously for 15 seconds.
5. Clean under fingernails.
6. Rinse soap off hands.
7. Dry hands thoroughly.
8. Use a dry paper towel to turn water off.

A good general rule - it should take you at least 15 seconds to wash your hands.

Any ideas to encourage kids to wash better?

Getting kids to do healthy behaviors such as washing hands or eating fruits and veggies often requires some creativity. Try these tips to get your kids to wash those germs away!

1. Use colorful soaps made for kids. Soaps that have fun scents can make handwashing fun.
2. Tell your child to sing while washing their hands. They have to keep washing until the song is done. "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or "Happy Birthday" are good suggestions.
3. Give kids a special towel, just for them, for drying.

For more information, hand washing print materials or to request a group presentation:

Call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7350;

Email btuttle@sedgwick.gov;

or visit www.sedgwickcounty.org/healthdept