



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Healthy Hand Hygiene

Global Handwashing Day – October 15, 2017

Recorded: October 10, 2017; posted: October 12, 2017

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Kathleen Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

Teaching young children personal hygiene can have a positive impact for a lifetime. Encouraging regular handwashing is a good start.

Dr. Vincent Hill is with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of regular handwashing. Welcome to the show, Vince.

[Dr. Hill] Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

[Dr. Dooling] Vince, what is the *proper* way to wash our hands?

[Dr. Hill] The most important part of washing your hands is to use soap and water. CDC recommends five steps for good hand washing. First, wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Second, lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap, making sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails. Third, try to scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds or about the time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice. Fourth, rinse your hands well under clean running water. And fifth, dry your hands with a clean towel or air dry them.

[Dr. Dooling] When should we wash our hands?

[Dr. Hill] Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food; before eating food; before and after caring for someone who's sick; after using the toilet; after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has just used the toilet; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and after touching an animal or cleaning up animal poop.

[Dr. Dooling] What kinds of illnesses can be prevented through regular and appropriate hand washing?

[Dr. Hill] So, feces, or poop, from people and animals can contain germs, like *Salmonella*, *Cryptosporidium*, and norovirus. These kinds of germs can get onto our hands after people use the toilet, change a diaper, or touch objects that might have invisible amounts of poop on them. Germs can also get on our hands if people touch objects that have germs on them from people sneezing or coughing. Handwashing removes these germs from our hands so that they don't get into our bodies and make us sick with illnesses, like diarrhea and respiratory diseases.

[Dr. Dooling] How can we clean our hands if we don't have access to soap and water?

[Dr. Hill] If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol are most effective at killing germs, but are not as effective for certain kinds of germs, like *Cryptosporidium* and norovirus. And hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. That's why washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them in most situations. When using hand sanitizer, make sure to use enough to wet all surfaces of your hands and rub until your hands are dry.

[Dr. Dooling] Give parents and caregivers some tips for teaching children to wash their hands.

[Dr. Hill] The best thing to do is to show by example. Be a model for handwashing by washing your hands and encouraging children to wash their hands frequently. For younger children, you can make handwashing fun by singing the Happy Birthday song twice while going through the five steps of proper hand washing.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about handwashing?

[Dr. Hill] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/handwashing.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Vince. I've been talking today with Dr. Vincent Hill about the importance of regular handwashing.

Handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to eliminate germs and prevent disease. Hands should be properly washed before eating, after using the bathroom, after sneezing or coughing, and after handling pets or garbage.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.