

News Release
Berny Unruh
Cottonwood Extension District Agent
Family and Community Wellness
October 17, 2019

Wash, wash, wash your hands

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) has launched *Life is Better with Clean Hands*, a national campaign encouraging adults to make clean hands a healthy habit at home and away. Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs and keep kids and adults healthy. When your family is healthy, you don't have to worry about missing school, work, or other activities.

Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Teach kids to - wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry - and teach the key times to wash hands, such as after using the bathroom or before eating. You can find ways to make it fun, like making up your own handwashing song or turning it into a game.

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Studies have shown that handwashing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related sicknesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, such as a cold or the flu.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.

4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Building handwashing skills takes time. At first, your child will need regular reminders of how and when to wash hands. It is especially important to remind children to wash their hands after using the bathroom, before eating, after touching pets, after playing outside, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing their nose. But once handwashing becomes a habit and a regular part of your child's day, they will practice it throughout their lives.

Young children learn by imitating the behaviors of adults in their lives. When you make handwashing part of your routine, you're setting an example for your children to follow. While washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs, if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol, and wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can.

-30-

Berny Unruh is the Family and Community Wellness Agent for the Cottonwood Extension District. She can be reached at 785-628-9430 or at bunruh@ksu.edu

Remember to make handwashing a healthy habit at home, school, and at play!