

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

It's obvious that you need to wash your hands regularly, but what does that mean? Can you wash your hands too much? Well, washing your hands too much can hurt your skin, but that can be remedied with hand lotion. There is no daily quota of hand washing that you have to hit in order to stay healthy. It all depends on your environment and what are you doing throughout the day.

You should wash your hands:

After using the toilet

Before touching or eating food

When they are dirty

After a prolonged use of objects known to harbour bacteria e.g. mobile phones, steering wheel on public use cars, visibly dirty door knobs etc. Wash your hands if you sneeze or cough into your hands. It is actually easier for children who are closely monitored to keep their hands clean with constant reminders. On the other hand, adults who are usually caught up with the daily activities have a higher tendency to overlook hand washing.

Knowing the positive impact of handwashing on your life and family generally is a good motivating factor to keep up with good hygienic habits. Below are the most important benefits of handwashing you should take note of:

1. Creating a safer working environment for medical staff and the patients

The nature of many kinds of medical procedures is very delicate. It usually deals with exposed internal organs or passing drugs into the body. So in these particular cases hand washing has to be taken seriously because harmful bacteria can easily get into our bodies to cause more harm.

Good medical facilities have the basic facilities for hand washing easily accessible. These facilities should be used regularly by the doctors, patients, and visitors.

Additionally, those facilities need to be absolutely sanitary and the soap dispensers, sanitizers and other items need to be replenished regularly. Also, special waste disposal units need to be in the washroom, as well.

The efforts for creating a safer working environment also include a more thorough and more detailed hand scrubbing than it is expected from other employees. There is a certain way medical personal prepares for the surgeries and interventions and it requires a lot of high-quality soap.

2. Prevention of diarrhoea and uncomfortable intestinal diseases

Contact with faecal matter laden with the causative bacteria can lead to diarrhoea and intestinal illnesses. Regular washing of the hands will remove this faecal matter and bacteria from our hands even when we have contacted them from other people or objects.

If this contamination happens over and over again, it is possible that your employees develop chronic issues with the intestinal bacteria. The new bacteria that a person introduces to their intestinal system by dirty hands destroys the balance which is difficult to restore. This is called SIBO – Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth.

While there are many treatments of such diseases, they are very stubborn and best prevented. You know what the prevention includes? Of course – regular and diligent hand washing.

3. Avoidance of common eye infections

Eye infections are commonly caused by the bacteria that get into the eyes from our hands. It would be great if you could refrain from touching your eyes with your bare hands. However, it usually happens involuntary.

Therefore, it is best to handle this in another way. Control what you can – wash your hands. Keeping the hands clean by regular washing will prevent common infections.

However, the common eye infections that happen as a result of direct contact with different germs are:

Conjunctivitis (pink eye)

Keratitis

Stye

Blepharitis

All these infections start with similar symptoms: redness of the eye, mild pain, itching sensation, blurry vision and the like. Again, while these issues are not very difficult to treat, prevention is a much wiser course of action. You should never touch your eyes with unwashed hands and your hand washing needs to be thorough.

Here are free hand washing posters that you can download and post in your office washrooms to constantly remind your employees to practice good hand hygiene in the workplace.