

WHY IS HAND HYGIENE SO IMPORTANT?

by Cool Springs Chiropractic Staff | May 15, 2020 | Health Tips

We shouldn't let **COVID-19** ravage through our community without taking away one crucial lesson, hand hygiene is incredibly important. Not only can properly washing your hands as often as possible help slow the spread of COVID-19, but it can also slow the spread of other viruses and bacteria.

So why is it, that a large portion of our society just completely ignores the basic codes of hand hygiene? Our team at Cool Springs Chiropractic has put together a guide to help the people of Franklin, Tennessee better understand why hand hygiene is so important.



WHY IS HAND HYGIENE SO IMPORTANT?

To help people fully understand the importance of proper hand hygiene, they must first understand what happens when they wash their hands. Handwashing with soap help removes germs from your hands. Everyone knows that, but why is this so important?

- We frequently touch our eyes, nose, and mouth without even realizing it. This causes germs to enter our body, making us sick.
- Without washing your hands, germs can get into food and drinks while we prepare or consume them. Certain germs can even multiply in these conditions, leading to illness
- Germs can be transferred from unwashed hands to other objects such as tables, rails, or toys, then transferring themselves into someone else's hands
You owe it to yourself and everyone around you to ensure that you are as clean as possible. Doing so can greatly help keep you and your community healthy.

WHAT CAN WASHING YOUR HANDS PREVENT?

Unfortunately, some people still don't understand the importance of washing their hands until they know the risk involved. Removing germs through handwashing helps prevent diarrhea and respiratory infections. Here are some numbers proving the effectiveness of proper, community-spread, hand hygiene:

- Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23-40%
- Diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems is decreased by 58%
- Respiratory illnesses, such as colds, are reduced in the general population by 16-21%
- Absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illnesses in schoolchildren is decreased by 57%

This is further proof that regularly washing your hands goes very far in protecting yourself and your community from preventable illness. The last thing you want is you or someone close to you falling ill all because you didn't wash your hands.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN

Around 1.8 million children under the age of five die every year from diarrheal diseases and pneumonia. These two diseases are the two top killers of young children around the world. Both of these diseases can be greatly reduced if we do a better job of washing our hands:

- Handwashing with soap can protect 1 out of every 3 young children who get sick with diarrhea
- It can also protect almost 1 out of every 5 young children with respiratory infections like pneumonia
- Handwashing education and access to soap in schools can help improve attendance
- Good handwashing habits learned early in life can help children develop lasting habits
- A societal commitment to proper hand hygiene can help save a countless number of children's lives

It's a shame to think that so many lives can be saved if we committed to washing our hands on a regular basis. Doing so can help you ensure your health as well as your children's.

WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

As mentioned earlier, there are so many times throughout the day that our hands are either making contact with our face or make contact with something we eat or drink. That's why washing your hands is so important. Here is when your hands should be washed:

- After using the restroom
- After changing a child's diaper
- Before handling or cooking food
- After handling raw food
- Before eating
- When visibly dirty
- After coughing or sneezing into your hands

These all seem obvious, but you would be surprised. Getting into a regular habit can help make washing your hands feel like second nature.



HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

Washing your hands frequently is a step in the right direction but it's important that you're washing your hands correctly. Make sure that you are washing both of your hands including the tips of your fingers, the palms of your hands and thumbs, as well as underneath your fingernails. Here is how you wash your hands properly:

- Wet your hands with water
- Apply enough soap to cover every surface of your hand
- Rub hands palm to palm
- Right palm over the back of the left hand with interlaced fingers and vice versa

- Palm to palm with fingers interlaced
- Back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked
- Rinse hands with water
- Dry hands with a single-use towel
- Use the towel to turn off the water

Much like washing your hands frequently, getting into a good habit of washing your hands correctly will become second-nature.

WHY SOAP IS IMPORTANT

Washing your hands is all for not without soap. Again, this sounds obvious, but you would be surprised how many people think running their hands under the water for a couple of seconds with no soap does enough. Washing your hands with soap and water will remove substantially more disease-causing organisms than washings hands with water alone.

It is recommended that you use liquid soap over bar soap if given the option. If washed correctly, the type of soap shouldn't matter. Antibacterial soap is unnecessary and offers no real advantage over regular soap.