TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Staying Healthy
ONE HANDWASH AT A TIME

National Handwashing Awareness Week is observed the first week in December (this year it will be observed December 6th through the 12th). Over the past year there's been a lot of focus on handwashing and the importance it plays in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), keeping your hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

Here's what you need to know about handwashing.

WHY IS HANDWASHING SO IMPORTANT?

Germs can quickly spread from other people or surfaces when you touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. If you touched a surface that someone just sneezed on, for example, and then touch your eye or mouth there's a good chance those germs will then enter your body (ick!). If you're sick and blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into your hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects you're likely spreading your germs/sickness to others.

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

» Before, during, and after preparing food

» Before eating food

» Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea

» Before and after treating a cut or wound

» After using the bathroom

» After changing diapers

» After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing

» After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste

» After handling pet food or pet treats

» After touching garbage

During this current pandemic it's also very important to wash your hands after you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people, like doors, tables, gas pumps, shopping carts, electronic cashier registers/screens, etc. Hand sanitizer is a good option if you can't get to soap and water immediately after touching these surfaces (more on hand sanitizer in just a bit!).

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5 SIMPLE STEPS TO EFFECTIVELY WASH YOUR HANDS

Washing your hands is easy, but there are a few things to keep in mind to ensure you're doing it properly. Here are five things the CDC recommends you do every time you wash your hands:

1. First, **wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold).

2. Then, **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. There's also now apps that you can use for timers!

4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.

5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

WHAT ABOUT HAND SANITIZERS?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. However, if soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a good substitute. You'll want to look for a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

When using a hand sanitizer:

» Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).

» Rub your hands together.

» Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds

Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.