



TOOLBOX TALK



HANDWASHING DURING COVID-19

Important Information:

While this topic may seem remedial, there is a correct way to wash your hands and that must be communicated to workers, especially during a pandemic like COVID-19. The interior of this toolbox talk starts with a message to convey this idea to workers.

USING THIS TOOLBOX TALK:

This toolbox talk gives a summary of basic safety procedures related to handwashing during COVID-19. **A site-specific COVID-19 Officer (who may also be the Health and Safety Officer) should be designated for every site to assist with these measures.**

Please note: This document is not intended to replace any formalized procedures currently in place at the worksite.

To limit the spread of COVID-19, do not pass this pamphlet around for workers to sign as you do with other LHSFNA toolbox talks.

Contact the LHSFNA's Occupational Safety and Health Division at 202-628-5465 to ask questions, provide feedback or for further assistance. Additional Fund toolbox talks can be ordered at www.lhsfna.org or by calling the number above.

BACKGROUND:

Studies show that **95 percent** of people wash their hands improperly, and during this pandemic, proper handwashing is crucial to not getting or spreading COVID-19. It is often seen as the first line of defense after eliminating exposure.

You've been washing your hands every day for years. Because of that, you might think this topic is trivial, but it's not. Proper handwashing matters. Simply put, it saves lives by stopping the spread of germs. It's common sense and it works, but it must be done properly to be effective.

Keeping our hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others, including COVID-19. Diligent handwashing can reduce risk for respiratory infections, including COVID-19, cold and flu.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

Along with breathing in respiratory droplets from someone coughing, sneezing or speaking, touching your face with unwashed hands after touching contaminated surfaces or objects is a direct way to easily spread the virus. The virus can live outside the body for a few hours or a few days depending on the surface, but it can be removed and killed before transmission. This is why it's so important to clean our hands and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects.

KEY TIMES TO WASH HANDS

You can protect yourself and others by washing your hands often or using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available, especially during these key times:

COVID-specific Handwashing Best Practices

- ▶ As soon as you get to work, before your shift starts
- ▶ After touching surfaces in public places or high-traffic areas
- ▶ After using the restroom
- ▶ After ending your shift
- ▶ Before and after sharing tools or equipment
- ▶ After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- ▶ After entering your home
- ▶ Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick

FAST FACT

Using hot water while washing your hands with soap does not kill any more germs and can irritate the skin. Use cold or warm water instead.

Additional Handwashing Best Practices Not Listed Above

- ▶ Whenever your hands are dirty
- ▶ Before and after eating or preparing food
- ▶ Before and after treating a cut or wound
- ▶ After handling trash

STEPS TO WASH HANDS THE RIGHT WAY

Cleaning hands onsite before and after coming in contact with high-touch surfaces can protect you, your coworkers and your family at home. Studies have shown that using liquid soap is as effective as using a bar of soap. Follow these steps every time you wash your hands:

HAND WASHING 101

- 1** USE SOAP
- 2** PALM TO PALM
- 3** BACK TO HANDS
- 4** FINGERS INTERLACED
- 5** BASE OF THUMBS
- 6** FINGERNAILS
- 7** WRISTS
- 8** RINSE HANDS
- 9** DRY HANDS

WASH FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS.

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FAST FACT

Your palms and fingers are not the only areas that need to be washed. High concentrations of germs can exist beneath your fingernails. Include these areas everytime you wash your hands.

WHAT IF SOAP AND RUNNING WATER ARE NOT AVAILABLE?

Washing your hands with soap and water is the ideal way to kill germs. Soap and water remove all types of germs from hands, while hand sanitizer kills germs on the skin. Although alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs in many situations, they should be used in the right situations. If soap and water are not available, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers that are at least 60 percent alcohol (look at the product label for confirmation).

Fortunately, hand sanitizers do a good job of killing the virus that causes COVID-19. However, hand sanitizers do have some limitations:

- ▶ They can lead to dry skin and infection.
- ▶ They are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- ▶ They do not always remove harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and heavy metals like lead.

What is the best way to use hand sanitizers?

- ▶ Apply a dime-sized amount of hand sanitizer to the palm of one hand (different products may vary, so always read the product label).
- ▶ Rub the hand sanitizer all over your hands and fingers until your hands are dry, using the same method as you do when you are washing your hands with soap and water.

DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS

1. How long should you wash your hands?
2. True or false: while washing your hands, you should use warm water.

TAKEAWAYS

1. Wash your hands for 20 seconds and be sure to cover all parts of your hands, including under your fingernails.
2. Hand sanitizer isn't as effective if your hands are dirty or greasy.
3. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

Date: _____

Instructor: _____

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