



How to Educate Others on the Importance of Hygiene

Young children are more vulnerable than any other age group to the ill effects of unsafe water, poor sanitation and lack of hygiene. These contribute to 88 per cent of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases. Nearly 90 per cent of deaths from diarrhoea are children under five years old.

The simple habit of handwashing with soap is estimated to reduce the incidence of diarrhea by nearly half. It also greatly reduces the risk of respiratory infections such as pneumonia and other diseases, including eye infections, especially trachoma. Unfortunately not everyone in the world has ready access to soap or clean water.

Parents and caregivers should wash their hands with soap and water at these critical moments: (1) after cleaning an infant or young child who has defecated, (2) after helping the child use the toilet or latrine, (3) after going to the latrine or toilet themselves, (4) before touching food and feeding young children, and (5) after dealing with refuse.

Steps

- 1 Understand the importance of hygiene.** In order to spread the message, it is important to know the facts. The basics are:
 - All feces, including those of babies and young children, should be disposed of safely. Making sure that all family members use a toilet, latrine or potty (for young children) is the best way to dispose of feces. Where there is no toilet, feces should be buried.
 - All family members, including children, need to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after any contact with feces, before touching or preparing food, and before feeding children. Where soap is not available, a substitute, such as ash and water, can be used.
 - Washing the face and hands with soap and water every day helps to prevent eye infections. In some parts of the world, eye infections can lead to trachoma, which can cause blindness.
 - All water that people drink and use should come from a safe source or be purified. Containers for carrying and storing water need to be kept clean inside and outside and covered to keep the water clean. Where necessary, home-based water treatment, such as boiling, filtering, adding chlorine or disinfecting with sunlight, should be used to purify the water.
 - Raw or leftover cooked food can be dangerous. Raw food should be washed or cooked. Cooked food should be eaten without delay or thoroughly reheated before eating.
 - Food, utensils and preparation surfaces should be kept clean and away from animals. Food should be stored in covered containers.
 - Safe disposal of all household refuse helps to keep the living environment clean and healthy. This helps prevent illness.
 - Hygiene is very important during menstruation. Clean and dry feminine hygiene products should be available to girls and women. A clean, private space should be provided to allow them to clean themselves and wash and dry their cloths. Sanitary napkins need to be disposed of carefully with other refuse or burned.

- 2 Teach yourself and others about the best ways to combat the spread of germs.**

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