

Facts and statistics

1. Clean hands the way to stop flu

If everyone were to wash their hands the risk of colds, flu and even bird flu would be much less, say UK experts. Professor John Oxford, of London's Queen Mary's School of Medicine, warns many people are failing to do so and are complacent about personal hygiene.

- Clean hands are key to cutting infections, say experts.
- His team looked at the most effective methods to prevent the transmission of colds and flu, including bird flu.
- Rather than relying on products such as antiviral tissues, personal cleanliness should be a priority, they say.
- Hand cleaning came out top.

More information on BBC.CO.UK <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4291124.stm> Wednesday, 28 September 2005, 15:39 GMT 16:39 UK

2. Hand washing Facts

The focus for the National Food Safety Week 2005 is on raising awareness of how hands can spread germs - which could lead to food poisoning.

It is estimated that as many as 5.5 million people could suffer from food poisoning each year*.

Did you know?

- Up to half of all men and a quarter of women fail to wash their hands after they've been to the toilet
- Right handed people tend to wash their left hand more thoroughly than their right hand, and visa versa
- We have between 2 and 10 million bacteria between fingertip and elbow
- Damp hands spread 1,000 times more germs than dry hands
- The number of germs on your fingertips doubles after you use the toilet
- Germs can stay alive on hands for up to three hours
- Millions of germs hide under watches and bracelets and there could be as many germs under your ring as there are people in Europe

Facts provided by foodlink, c/o Food and Drink Federation, 6 Catherine Street, London, WC2B 5JJ, main sponsors of the 2005 National Food Safety Week.

* Figures from the Food Standards Agency.

<http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk/ccm/content/press-releases/2005/06/Press-Release-10687LH-05.en;jsessionid=21AA436D8BB16331EBA781742B3E7F96>

3. Hospital acquired infections

Germs can be passed from patient to patient, on the hands of staff, parents and carers. It is this transfer of germs that can cause **infections and illness**.

One of the easiest ways of preventing infections being passed on is by **good hand hygiene**. Many infections could be prevented by correct hand washing to remove the germs that are picked up through our daily tasks. This is the best defence we have in preventing infections from spreading and can help save lives.

More information on The Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust

http://www.alderhey.com/RLCH/Patient_Information.asp?page=46

4. Food poisoning

It has been estimated that there are about 76 million foodborne illnesses each year in America, resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths. Government statistics indicate that at least 25 percent of these illnesses are due to improper hand washing. These illnesses cost billions of dollars in medical charges, lost wages, lost business, lawyers' fees, and legal claims, and can lead to long-term debilitating illnesses. To avoid causing foodborne illnesses, good personal hygiene practices, particularly when handling food must be followed and maintained.

More information on Hospitality Institute of Technology & Management (HITM)

<http://www.hi-tm.com/Documents2000/Hand-poster.html>

5. There are no known cures for colds and flu, prevention is the best way. Be proactive and positive especially in the workplace.

Hand Washing

Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. Someone who has the flu sneezes onto their hand, and then touches the telephone, the keyboard, a kitchen glass. The germs can live for hours -- even weeks -- to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object. So wash your hands often. If you have no facilities use some disinfected wipes, but remember these are only effective for removing germs they won't prevent them.

More information on <http://www.ecademy.com/node.php?id=57765>

6. Handwashing: A Critical Issue

Statistics: School days missed

Every year, more than 164 million school days are lost due to illness. It is believed that a great number of these days could be reduced if children merely washed their hands properly and regularly.

*Source: "Vital Health and Statistics, Current Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, 1995" (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics, 1998).

Opportunity to improve health of children

A study of 305 Detroit school children found that youngsters who washed their hands four times a day had 24% fewer sick days due to respiratory illness and 51% fewer days due to upset stomach.

Source: Reuters New Media, www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/fsehandw.html

Save money for schools

School absences resulting from sick students and teachers are more than just disruptive, they can be expensive, too. Schools need to pay substitutes when teachers are sick and teachers need to spend extra time and resources helping sick students catch up. Parents are also affected because of lost work days and additional healthcare expenses due to having a child sick at home. With school district budgets as tight as they are these days, it makes financial sense to significantly limit school days missed due to avoidable illnesses.

http://www.scrubclub.org/assets/pdf/teachers_guide.pdf

7. The dirty secret of the hand towel

We all know that dirty hands can transmit germs and how important it is that we wash our hands before eating, preparing and handling food or after using the toilet. But washing doesn't solve the whole problem when it comes to getting hands clean. Because no matter how clean and bacteria free hands are after washing, drying them on an ordinary kitchen hand towel simply smears bacteria back on to them.

Kitchen and washroom hand towels are notorious for harboring and breeding bacteria. fuelled by their shared and frequent use as well as the damp, temperature and humidity conditions that

enable bacteria to multiply uncontrollably!

Tests show that bacteria on a towel can grow from one to 2/3 million in a kitchen or washroom in a matter of just four hours - to 1bn after 1 days normal use - to 10bn 2-3 days later and to 100bn plus by the end of the week! Given that we wash hand towels once every week on average its no wonder that hygienic hand drying is of such crucial importance in the promotion of good food safety, health and personal hygiene.

Keep your germs to yourself!

Andrew Kirk MSc AIEMA Consultant Environmental Microbiologist says "More than 18 million people in the UK risk transferring germs each day from bacteria laden hands to the face, foods, food preparation surfaces, cutlery and crockery, light switches, telephones, taps and other people as a result of not washing or drying their hands properly. But in fact more often than not its the drying process that's at the root of the problem where hand towels are prone to bacterial colonisation and so can transmit bacteria and cause cross contamination. Indeed many of the millions of cases every year of stomach bugs and food poisoning in the home, which can be serious especially for the elderly and children can be attributed to the hygienic weakness of the ordinary hand towel."

"Hand drying matters! How you dry your hands contributes significantly to how clean your hands are and therefore the removal of the risk of cross infection.

[http://www.livingiseasy.co.uk/products/cat5/cat86/cat170/HYGI_Anti_bacterial_Superabsorbent_Microfibre_Kitchen_Hand_Towel_Waffle_Weave_-_Blue_\(60x37cm\)._The_hygienic_way_to_dry_your_hands/index.html?bestsellers=3](http://www.livingiseasy.co.uk/products/cat5/cat86/cat170/HYGI_Anti_bacterial_Superabsorbent_Microfibre_Kitchen_Hand_Towel_Waffle_Weave_-_Blue_(60x37cm)._The_hygienic_way_to_dry_your_hands/index.html?bestsellers=3)

8. More information:

Germ wars: revenge of the supergel

<http://www.thisisthenortheast.co.uk/healthspectrum/features/0505/supergel.html>

Hands on: a critical look at infection control

http://www.aromacaring.co.uk/hand_washing.htm

Food Poisoning and Diarrhoea

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/text/environmentalhealth?url=ehfood-dis-foodpoisoninganddiarrhoea.htm&&loc=undefined>

Tips for Battling the Common Cold

http://www.dundeemessenger.co.uk/lifestyle/health/cold_remedies.htm