

## Nurse Notes: Here's another way to stay healthy:

### HANDWASHING

Nearly all experts on infection control agree that **handwashing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections.**

Proper handwashing will “float away” about 95% of all bacteria found on the hands lowering the chance of accidentally spreading germs found on the hands to the mouth, nose, eyes, or ears especially by children.

#### **The 2 kinds of bacteria found on the hands are:**

1. **Resident bacteria** that multiply, survive, and are routinely found on the skin.
2. **Transient bacteria** that were recently in contact with the skin and will survive only for a short period of time.

Bacteria can be removed from the skin mechanically by handwashing with plain soaps in various forms which suspends the bacteria and allows them to be washed off. Plain soap appears to be sufficient for routine handwashing but more studies are needed.

#### **Proper Hand washing procedure calls for:**

1. Handwashing *with a lotion soap* for at least 15 seconds with 30 to 60 seconds preferred.
2. Special attention to scrubbing *under and around the nails* the site of the highest concentration of bacteria found on the hands.
3. Rinsing soap off with warm water.
4. Drying hands with a disposable paper towel.
5. Using a dry paper towel to turn off water.

#### **Soap Precautions to prevent contamination:**

1. Keep Bar Soap in a *drainable dish*.
2. Refillable soap dispensers *need to be cleaned* before refilling to prevent contamination.

**Note: Use of gloves does not negate the need for handwashing.** Recent studies have found gloves have **not** stopped all organisms from traveling through the gloves to the skin.

#### **Children Should be Taught to Wash Hands:**

1. Before meals, snacks, or drinks.
2. Before handling food or setting the table.
3. Before bedtime or naps.
4. Before brushing teeth.
5. Before inserting contact lenses.
6. After scrapes or scratches.
7. After handling garbage, trash, or dirty items.
8. After using the toilet.
9. After covering face for coughs or sneezing.

#### **Parents & Teachers:**

Two websites on handwashing for children are:

1. [www.gphealthsmart.com](http://www.gphealthsmart.com) Click on the clean hands symbol for games, activities, and lesson plans for K-3.
2. [www.microbe.org](http://www.microbe.org) Click on the magnifying glass for a true / false quiz that gives a comment regardless of the answer chosen.

Ref. 1. CDC Handwashing Guide 2. GPHealthsmart 3. Walter Reed Hospital Infection Control Policy.