



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Make Handwashing a Habit

Global Handwashing Day — October 15, 2016

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hands have been called “highways of transmission” because they are the easiest and most common way to pass along infectious diseases.

Jacqueline Hurd is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of regular handwashing. Welcome to the show, Jackie

[Ms. Hurd] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jackie, what diseases are most commonly transmitted by unwashed hands?

[Ms. Hurd] Many diseases are spread on your hands, but some of the most common are colds and diarrheal diseases, including Norovirus.

[Dr. Gaynes] How do bacteria and viruses get on our hands?

[Ms. Hurd] Germs often get onto hands after people use the bathroom, change a diaper, or touch something that has germs on it, like raw meats. They can also get on our hands after we cough or sneeze.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is handwashing effective in preventing the spread of infectious diseases?

[Ms. Hurd] Yes. Handwashing is one of the best ways you can prevent infectious diseases and spreading germs to others. It's especially important to wash your hands often with soap and water during the cold and flu season.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jackie, is using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer an acceptable alternative to soap and water handwashing?

[Ms. Hurd] Hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol are a great alternative when soap and water are not available. However, they're not very effective if hands are visibly dirty or greasy and they do not eliminate all types of germs.

[Dr. Gaynes] Give our listeners some tips on effective handwashing.

[Ms. Hurd] There are three key points to effective handwashing. The first is using soap. It removes germs *much* better than water alone. Next, scrub all the surfaces of your hands, including under your

nails and in between your fingers. And finally, wash your hands for about 20 seconds which is about the time it takes you to sing the Happy Birthday song twice.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about handwashing?

[Ms. Hurd] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/handwashing.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Jackie. I've been talking today with CDC's Jacqueline Hurd about handwashing.

Remember—Handwashing is especially important before eating or handling food, and after going to the bathroom, changing a diaper, touching or feeding an animal, coughing, or sneezing. Make it a habit to wash your hands often with soap and water.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.