

November 14th, 2019

For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223 or email: nurse@swhealth.ne.gov

Handwashing is Key to Good Health

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is encouraging everyone to review how they wash their hands. Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps to take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean running water, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“With the start of cold and flu season, it is extremely important to follow the CDC handwashing recommendations to help you stay healthy,” states Melissa Propp, RN Public Health Nurse with SWNPHD.

You should wash your hands any time they are visibly dirty, and in the following situations: before, during and after preparing food, before eating food, before and after caring for someone who is sick, before and after treating a cut or wound, after using the toilet, after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing into your hands, after touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste, after handling pet food or pet treats, and after touching garbage.

Here is a reminder on the most effective way to wash your hands:

- 1) Wet your hands with warm water and add soap.
- 2) Rub your hands together, making sure to scrub all areas.
- 3) Scrub for a minimum of 20 seconds or sing/hum the Happy Birthday song twice.
- 4) Rinse thoroughly, then dry your hands on a clean towel.
- 5) Turn the faucet off with the towel, not your hand, to prevent recontamination.

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. According to the CDC, hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

The health department provides free handwashing posters on the website www.swhealth.ne.gov. Free handwashing stickers for bathrooms are also available at both offices.

For more information or to schedule a handwashing demonstration, contact Melissa at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th (one block north of Arby's) in McCook or 501 Broadway in Imperial (5th Street entrance). Information can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.

####