

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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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).

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 bathroom, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing into your hands, after touching an animal, after handling pet food or pet treats, and after touching garbage.

Here is a reminder of 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, keeping hands out of the water.
- 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 avoid picking up germs again.

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.

SWNPHD can provide free handwashing lessons for children in daycare, kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grade this fall. Good handwashing skills can reduce the spread of illness and lower absentee rates.

SWNPHD also provides free handwashing posters on their website at swhealth.ne.gov and handwashing stickers are available for bathroom mirrors by stopping in or calling.

For more information or to schedule a handwashing demonstration, contact Paula 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, 409 Broadway in Imperial and 418 North Spruce in Ogallala. Information can also be found on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

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