



Toolbox Talks for Club Employees: The Importance of Handwashing

The single most important action we can take to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to wash our hands. As a club employee, you interact with dozens of club members and fellow employees on a daily basis. You carry millions of microbes on your hands. Most are harmless, but you can pick up some that cause illnesses such as colds, flu, Hepatitis A and other illnesses. Handwashing can also deter the spread of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Norovirus, E. Coli and other bacteria or viruses.

When we do not wash our hands properly, we spread these germs to other people, or give them to ourselves by touching our eyes, mouths, noses or open wounds on our bodies. We can also pick up germs from objects and surfaces, such as doorknobs and stair railings, touched by other people who are not properly washing their hands. Think about all the things you touch each day and how many people may have touched them before you.

When should employees wash their hands?

Employees should wash their hands after any potential contamination, such as handling food; using the washroom; touching their hair or clothing; sneezing or coughing; eating, drinking or smoking; carrying trays to the table, removing dirty plates, taking out the trash; or handling any type of waste materials.

How long should it take to effectively wash your hands?

Effective hand-washing takes 20 seconds, or about the time it takes to sing two choruses of "Happy Birthday."

What is the proper hand-washing technique?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you should use the following technique:

1. Hands should be washed using soap and warm, running water.
2. Hands should be rubbed vigorously during washing for at least 20 seconds with special attention paid to the backs of the hands, wrists, between the fingers and under the fingernails.
3. Hands should be rinsed well while leaving the water running.
4. With the water running, hands should be dried with a single-use towel.
5. Turn off the water using a paper towel, covering washed hands to prevent re-contamination.

What other actions should employees take to prevent the spread of germs in the workplace?

1. If water is not immediately accessible, keep hands clean using an alcohol-based sanitizer.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until fully healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, razors or clothes.

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