



November/December 2006

## Calendar of Clean

November is ...

- **Thanksgiving: Nov. 23**  
See [Bringing a Dish to the Holiday Party](#) and [Make Room for Turkey](#) articles  
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/september.html>

December is ...

- **National Handwashing Awareness Week: Dec. 3 – 9**  
[See Why Handwashing Is Important](#) article
- **National Healthy Skin Month**  
[See Why Handwashing Is Important](#) article  
<http://www.aad.org/default.htm>
- **National Family Caregivers Month**  
<http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org/empowerment/nfcmmonth.cfm>

## Features

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### Bringing a Dish to the Holiday Party **How to travel safely with prepared foods**

In our "oh-so-busy" world, holiday entertaining is often a communal affair, with friends and relatives contributing to the feast.

But bringing a dish to share can be an unintentional invitation to unwanted guests – bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. To be sure these party crashers don't make it through the door, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips for traveling safely with prepared foods.

#### Prepare with Care

Safe food travel starts with safe food preparation. That means clean hands, utensils and food preparation surfaces. Use hot water and soap to effectively get rid of bacteria. Thoroughly wash your hands before and after food preparation. Never, ever go directly from working with raw meat, poultry or seafood to

working with other foods without washing your equipment – cutting boards, dishes and utensils – and your hands with soap and hot water. If you don't do this, you run the risk of transferring the bacteria that live in these uncooked foods to other items on your menu.

### Cooked Foods

Divide cooked foods, including meats, gravy, dressing, stews and casseroles, into small containers and refrigerate or freeze immediately, as appropriate to the item. Using multiple small containers, rather than one large one, has many benefits. Cooked food will cool or freeze faster and more evenly, and can be thawed or thoroughly reheated in less time. When it's time to travel, smaller containers are easier to fit in a cooler. And don't worry if they take up more space – that's a good thing. A fully packed cooler maintains its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.

### Uncooked Foods

Even uncooked foods require some special attention. If you're bringing raw fruits or vegetables, remember that they don't receive the safety benefits that cooking provides.

- Before purchasing or packing these items, check for visual signs of spoilage. These include unusual odors or colors, or shriveled, moldy or bruised items.
- If possible, rinse just before preparing and serving. Use running water. If standing water is used, the microorganisms that have been rinsed off one item can be transferred to another.
- If you need to bring them ready-to-eat, rinse, then blot dry with a paper towel and pack in containers or plastic bags. Make sure there is no excess liquid in the containers. Store them in the refrigerator until it's time to leave, and then pop them in the cooler.

### Pack Safely

Pack the cooler as close to departure time as possible.

- If the cooler is only partially filled, pack the remaining space with more ice packs or plastic bags filled with ice cubes. Use sealable bags so that if the ice begins to melt, the liquid is contained.
- Once the cooler is packed, consider the best location in your car. If you are traveling in a warm climate with the air conditioner running, keep the cooler in the car; in a colder climate with the heat running, store it in the trunk.

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## News Flash

### News Flash! 2006 SNAP Award Winners

Students from Altoona (Wisconsin) Middle School know about the health benefits of hand hygiene – hands down. And their in-school efforts teaching about the importance of clean hands have led to national recognition: they are the recipients of the 2006 Top Classroom Award from the "Healthy Schools, Healthy People – It's a SNAP" national awards program.

SNAP – the School Network for Absenteeism Prevention ([www.itsasnap.org](http://www.itsasnap.org)) – is a joint initiative of The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The five-year-old program encourages middle schools to help develop programs that make hand hygiene a priority for students, teachers, school health personnel, administrators and parents.

As the Top Classroom Award recipient, a group of Altoona Middle School students received an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., a cash award and free hand hygiene products for their school. The award reception, held at the National Press Club, featured acknowledgments by CDC leaders and SDA members.

### Wisconsin Students Encourage Good Hygiene at School and at Home

Several Altoona sixth-grade English students scripted and taped a handwashing video for broadcast on their school's closed circuit TV program. In addition, they made signs and table tents for display in important handwashing locations such as school kitchens, bathrooms, locker rooms and cafeterias. Students also drafted letters that were sent to parents to encourage hand hygiene at home.

Through the school's participation in SNAP, "the students and staff become aware of the importance of handwashing and hand hygiene," said Anita Schubring, Altoona Middle School nurse. "It promotes health and it was very fun to do."

### California, Florida Students Receive Runners-Up Honors

Recognized as runners-up were middle school students and teachers from California and Florida. Ralston Middle School in Belmont, California, won praise for their program, W.A.S.H., Water and Soap Help, now in its second year (a group of Ralston students received the 2005 Top Classroom Award from SNAP). The students teamed up with a professional production studio to create a video guide for educators to use in the classroom. Additionally, the students developed a CD, posters, pamphlets and other resource materials, which were made available to all schools in San Mateo County.

The language arts class at DeLaura Middle School in Satellite Beach, Florida, earned recognition for the development and implementation of "Make a Difference Day." Students distributed healthy-habit tips and placed health supplies, such as hand sanitizers and wipes, in the classroom. School absentee numbers were used to determine the relationship between the availability of health supplies, student absenteeism and trips to the school clinic.

### Hand Hygiene Education – Critical with the Onset of Cold and Flu Season

"I applaud the SNAP handwashing program's ongoing efforts to educate our children about handwashing. Proper handwashing is a simple and effective method of preventing the spread of communicable illness, and can lead to better health," said Acting Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H. "Teaching our children the importance of basic hygiene prepares them to better appreciate and embrace broader prevention messages as they grow."

"Students who participate in SNAP are spreading the word about the importance of handwashing," said Nancy Bock, SDA's Vice President of Education and Meetings. "They are taking ownership of their health, putting to good use what they're being taught, and promoting critical hygiene practices."

The SNAP program launches at the beginning of each school year, just as cold and flu season approaches. According to CDC, cleaning one's hands is the single most important thing people can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness.

The SNAP initiative brings this message into schools, where nearly 22 million school days are lost due to the common cold and where certain strains of *E. coli*, salmonella and other bacteria can live on surfaces like cafeteria tables and doorknobs for up to two hours. While basic hygiene is generally learned during early childhood, research points to the benefits of repeating hygiene lessons during the k-12 curricula.

### Educators and Students: Submit Your Entries for 2007

The 2007 SNAP program is now underway, and there is still time for schools to participate. All entries must be received by March 2007. Interested educators can learn more and download specific information by visiting the SNAP website, <http://www.itsasnap.org>.

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## Housecleaning Ergonomics

### **How to clean the house safely**

Injuries are no stranger to those involved in sports, but did you know that you can be at risk of injury from everyday activities such as cleaning your house? You can get tennis elbow without ever lobbing a ball!

But elbows aren't the only body parts at risk. Improper or overuse of muscles and tendons in the fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and back, as well as repeated movements and awkward postures, can cause fatigue and strain that may permanently damage soft tissues. These aches and pains, known as Repetitive Strain Injury or Cumulative Trauma Disorder, can require medical attention. Twisting to clean in areas behind hard-to-reach pipes, straining to dust a light fixture that's out of arm's reach or leaning on both knees while you clean the tub can cause body aches.

Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings at The Soap and Detergent Association, points out some common mistakes people make when cleaning house and offers some suggestions for avoiding new injuries and minimizing flare-ups of existing ones.

#### Bending Basics

When housecleaning, bending is almost like breathing – most of us don't even give it a thought! We bend to pick up cleaning supplies or bend to clean in corners and crannies. If you are in the habit of hunching your shoulders and bending over from the waist, you are a candidate for back strain. To help avoid this, bend at your knees and keep a hollow in your back. Practice this bending technique until it becomes second nature.

#### Knee Knowledge

If a task like scrubbing the floor or cleaning the tub calls for getting down on your knees, don't put pressure on both knees at the same time. Instead, kneel on one knee and then switch to the other one every minute. Alternating knees will minimize and disperse the pressure.

#### Reach Right

Reaching farther than your full arm extension can put strain on both your shoulders and your spine. Use a sturdy stool or stepladder so that you don't hyperextend your back. Use cleaning and dusting products that include wands or poles that extend your reach.

#### Lift Light

Whether you're picking up the laundry basket or the cleaning bucket, bend from the knees and keep the back straight as you lift straight up. To help avoid back strain, keep the load close to your body. If the load is heavy or awkward, don't lift it by yourself – get a buddy to help.

#### Take Stretch Breaks

Whether you're scrubbing the floor or folding laundry, stand up and gently stretch your body several times an hour. Your spinal column is surrounded by fluid that contains nutrients. Each time you move your spine, those cells receive much-needed nutrients that will help prevent stiffening.

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## Why Handwashing Is Important

### **Preventing sickness during the winter months**

With everyone crowded indoors during the winter months, colds and flu don't want to be left out in the cold. One of the best ways of preventing these illnesses from getting a toehold on your family's health is

also amazingly simple: Get your gang to wash their hands!

Hands are the most common spreaders of germs, reports Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings at The Soap and Detergent Association. Because they are often warm and moist, hands provide the perfect place for germs to live. Frequent handwashing – before and after food preparation, after coughing or sneezing, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and playing with pets – can stop germs in their tracks. It's also a good idea to wash your hands when returning home from school or work so the germs from the outside world don't settle in.

Here's how to properly wash your hands:

1. Wet hands with warm running water. Then apply soap.
2. Rub hands together vigorously to make lather and scrub all surfaces. Continue for 20 seconds, which is about how long it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice through.
3. Rinse well under warm, running water.
4. Dry hands thoroughly using paper towels or an air dryer. If possible, use paper towels to turn off the faucet.

To make handwashing more appealing to children, purchase colorful, child-friendly soaps in interesting shapes or foaming hand soaps designed to dispense a single "dose."

Hand sanitizers and hand wipes are easy, convenient and portable. They're the perfect alternative when soap and running water aren't available.

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Bleach Makes a Difference

### **Using chlorine bleach to remove more body soil**

On a normal day, the average person gives off one liter of sweat, eliminates one billion dead skin cells, and runs off 10 grams of sebum, otherwise known as body oil. All of this adds up to a lot of body soil that is embedded into the fibers of clothes, towels and sheets. Initial washing with detergent alone may leave these items looking and smelling clean. However, over time, body soil can build up in the fabrics, causing yellowing and dinginess, wearing down the fibers and providing a feasting ground for bacteria and dust mites.

That's where chlorine bleach can come to the rescue, declares Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings at The Soap and Detergent Association. When chlorine bleach is added to the laundry load, it reacts with and breaks down body soil components into smaller, water-soluble particles that are easier for the detergent to remove. Once removed, the smaller particles are easier to keep suspended in the wash water, which prevents the body soil from redepositing itself onto the clean clothes. Before using chlorine bleach, check care labels on your clothing to be sure it is safe for the fabric. Carefully read and follow the label directions on the bleach bottle.

For best results:

- Add detergent as the washer fills up.
- Add the soiled items after the agitation has begun.
- Once the items are thoroughly wet and the machine has agitated for five minutes, add bleach that has been diluted in one quart of water.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions on the care label.

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Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: How do I care for articles made of fleece?

A: Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the care label. Generally, items made from fleece are machine washable and dryable. After prolonged wear and laundering, some pilling may occur. To minimize this, always turn the garment inside out and wash on the gentle cycle. Brushing with a soft brush while drying will also help keep pilling to a minimum.

Q: I'm having a dinner guest who suffers from asthma. What can I do to prepare my home for her?

A: The most common asthma triggers in and around the home are dust mites, animal dander, cockroaches and their droppings, mold and mildew, and pollen. To minimize your guest's exposure, give your home a good cleaning. Use a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust, rather than a dry cloth that simply moves it from one place to another. Vacuum the carpets and wet-mop the floors.

A wood-burning fireplace and a live Christmas tree are hallmarks of the season that may also spell trouble for your guest. Forego the fire, as smoke from the wood can trigger an asthma attack. Evergreens often carry microscopic mold spores that reproduce in the warmth of your home. Before bringing the tree indoors, let it dry out on an enclosed porch or garage, while keeping the trunk in a bucket of water so it doesn't die. When you purchase the tree, ask if the tree retailer has a shaking machine, which will physically remove some of the allergens from the tree.

Finally, let your guests know if you have pets so that they have the option of taking medication before they arrive.

– Nancy Bock is Vice President of Education and Meetings for The Soap and Detergent Association

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Clean Ideas: Make Room for Turkey

### **Cleaning out the refrigerator before the holiday treats arrive**

Take the time to clean out the refrigerator before the holiday goodies arrive so there will be plenty of room to store perishable eats and treats. Follow these helpful tips:

- Read your refrigerator manual for specific cleaning instructions and for information on removing shelves, drawers, and locating and cleaning condenser coils.
- Unplug the refrigerator and remove everything inside.
- Discard anything that looks or smells bad; check the expiration dates on the remaining items.
- Put perishable foods in a cooler or ice chest to keep them at a safe temperature.
- Scrub the interior walls of the refrigerator, using warm water and a mild detergent. Rinse and wipe dry.
- Remove drawers and shelves and use the same process to clean them.
- Clean the condenser coils, following the manufacturer's instructions. Coils are usually located underneath the refrigerator. Remove the grill and vacuum, using the vacuum's long, narrow attachment.
- Wash the rubber gasket around the door, using warm water and mild dish detergent.
- Wipe down bottles, jars and other containers before putting them back in the refrigerator.
- Plug in the refrigerator.