

Cleaning Matters

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

September/October 2007

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Calendar of Clean

September is ...

- **Fruit and Vegetable Month**
(See *Getting a Handle on Childhood Obesity* article)
- **National Food Safety Education Month**
(See *Food Safety for People with Diabetes* article)
- **National Clean Hands Week:** Sept. 16 – 22
(See *SNAP Program Featured in CDC Podcast* and *Handwashing for Better Health* articles)
- **NEAFCS Annual Session & Exhibits:** Sept. 17 – 20
(See *2007 NEAFCS Award Recipients Announced* article)

October is ...

- **National Health Education Week:** Oct. 15 – 20
(See *Getting a Handle on Childhood Obesity* article)
- **National School Health Week:** Oct. 15 – 19
(See *SNAP Program Featured in CDC Podcast* and *Handwashing for Better Health* articles)
- **National School Lunch Week:** Oct. 15 – 19
(See *Getting a Handle on Childhood Obesity* article)
- **Halloween:** Oct. 31
(See *Ask Nancy!* article)

Handwashing for Better Health

Hand sanitizers – an important member of the team

The change in routine that September brings offers the perfect opportunity to re-energize your family's good health habits . . . and frequent handwashing is a good health habit that should get special attention. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it is the single most important practice that will keep us all from getting sick and spreading illness.

That's because people with colds typically carry the virus on their hands, where, unless proper handwashing intervenes, it can stay alive for at least two hours. These live viruses can also be transmitted from hands to other surfaces, such as cafeteria tables, doorknobs, telephone receivers, computer keyboards, toys, games, etc., where they lay and wait for several hours for another set of hands to pick them up.

Each year, 22 million school days are lost due to the common cold. So if your family hasn't jumped on the Clean Hands Bandwagon, now is the time to get them on board, suggests Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. Critical times for handwashing include before and after meals and snacks; before and after preparing food, especially raw meat, poultry, or seafood; after using the bathroom; after touching animals; after touching a public surface; when hands are dirty; before caring for young children; and when you or someone around you is ill.

more



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Handwashing for Better Health (cont'd)

Shop Smart

No matter how hard you try, some supply shopping is usually necessary. Shopping early is one way to sidestep the crowds. To avoid “buying blind,” check with your school district for a list of supplies. Some school districts and many private schools now post lists of required supplies, by grade level, on their websites prior to the first day of school.

Hand Hygiene Products

Hand hygiene products come in many forms – each having its own benefits. Choose the form that best suits your family’s needs and the situation.

- **Bar soaps:** Designed to clean the skin by removing dirt and oils.
- **Liquid or Foaming Hand Soaps:** Designed to dispense a single dose for cleaning hands.
- **Hand sanitizers:** Designed to kill germs on hands that are not visibly dirty, without the need for water or towels.
- **Hand Wipes:** Designed to wipe away dirt from hands.

When soap and water aren’t convenient, hand sanitizers and wipes can fit the bill. In a study conducted by Children’s Hospital Boston, a group of 292 families was divided into two equal-sized groups and tracked for five months. Half of the families were given hand sanitizer, which was found to reduce infectious disease by 59 percent more than in the homes of the other group, who were not given sanitizer. However, when these products are used in places with young children – particularly those under age six – common sense must be observed. Alcohol is a significant ingredient in hand sanitizers and hand wipes. When used according to the manufacturer’s directions, most of the alcohol evaporates into the air, posing no danger to children. However, if a small child ingests the product directly, signs and

symptoms of alcohol intoxication could occur. It’s important to note that these products contain explicit warnings about the dangers they pose and that responsible adults should keep the products out of reach of young explorers. Adult supervision while the product is being used is also important.

Proper Handwashing Techniques

Bar or hand soaps:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water. Then apply soap.
2. Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces. Continue for 20 seconds, which is about how long it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.
3. Rinse well under warm, running water.
4. Dry hands thoroughly using paper towels or an air dryer. Avoid community hand towels that are repeatedly used by everyone in the family. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Hand sanitizers: Apply one or two squirts of the product to your hands, and then rub them together briskly. Rub the front, the back, between your fingers, and around and under nails until your hands are dry.

Hand wipes: Wipe all areas of your hands until they are visibly clean. Depending on how dirty or sticky your hands are, this might require more than one wipe. When finished, dispose of the wipes in an appropriate trash container and let your hands air-dry.

Additional sources:

Cleaning Matters, Sept./Oct 2004, p. 2

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/sep2005/2005-09-06-09.asp#anchor7>

Getting a Handle on Childhood Obesity

Making a safe, healthy lunch part of the prevention strategy

In addition to the health issues attributed to childhood obesity, new research points to psychosocial issues – and absenteeism. The research study, conducted on fourth-to-sixth-grade students in nine schools in Philadelphia, indicates that the more overweight a child is, the more likely he or she is to be absent from school. Researchers suggest that higher absenteeism isn't due to illness or other physical issues but to psychosocial issues, such as the intense social pressures and poor self-esteem that affect many overweight children.

Consequently, as more and more research points to both the physical and psychological effects of childhood obesity, parents, educators, and healthcare professionals are looking for ways to address the problem. In one such endeavor, four of the National Institutes of Health have joined forces to create the national education program *We Can!*, which stands for *Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition*. The program is designed to help parents and caregivers keep children 8 to 13 years old at a healthy weight. *We Can!* offers information on energy balance (which takes into account daily calorie input versus daily energy output plus the amount of calories children require to grow), balanced nutrition, portion control, and more. For more information, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan.

Many parents are finding that one of the surest ways to control the contents and portions of a child's lunch is to pack it at home. To make sure bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses don't tag along inside that lunch sack, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some safety tips.

Keep It Clean

- Make sure your hands, food-preparation surfaces, and utensils are clean. Use hot, soapy water to effectively get rid of bacteria.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly and paper-towel them dry before packing.

Keep It Cold

Because bacteria grow more slowly on cold items, anything you can do to make cold foods colder for longer is a good thing.

- Make sandwiches the night before and refrigerate until morning.
- Sandwiches (minus lettuce, tomatoes, or mayonnaise) can be frozen overnight. Choose coarse-textured bread, such as whole wheat, so the bread won't get soggy when it thaws.
- If morning assembly is more your style, pre-chill sandwich fixings, like bread and canned tuna, in the refrigerator until you're ready to fix lunch.
- If lunches are made the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until it's time to pack up and go.
- A single-size juice pack can double as a cold pack if left in the freezer overnight. The juice will thaw by lunchtime, but will still be cold.

Pack It Safe

- An insulated lunch box is the best container.
- If you're packing the lunch in a brown bag, double-bag it for better insulation and add a cold source, such as a cold pack or frozen juice pack.
- Pack hot foods in an insulated thermos so they stay hot until lunchtime. Pre-warm the thermos by filling it with boiling water. Let it stand for a few minutes, then empty out the water and put in the food. Keep the thermos closed until lunchtime.

News Flash

SNAP Program Featured in CDC Podcast *Successful middle-school initiative provides inspiration*

SNAP, a collaboration between The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), encourages middle schools to help develop programs that make hand hygiene a priority for students, teachers, school health personnel, administrators, and parents. The five-year-old hands-on initiative is designed to help keep students in school and learning by improving overall health through promoting clean hands.

SNAP is the subject of a new podcast on the CDC website and can be viewed by visiting <http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=6037>.

The short video focuses on how schools across the nation are educating their students on the importance of hand hygiene. The piece includes testimonials from award-winning program participants and comments from CDC director Julie Gerberding.

The SNAP program launches at the beginning of each school year, just as cold and flu season approaches. Interested educators and students can learn more and download specific information by visiting the SNAP website (www.itsasnap.org) or by sending an email to SNAP@cleaning101.com.

2007 NEAFCS Award Recipients Announced

SDA honors innovative educational programs

For many years, Extension educators have used consumer education materials produced by The Soap and Detergent Association to support their grassroots programs. *The SDA Clean Homes ... Safe and Healthy Families Program of Excellence Award* recognizes NEAFCS (National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences) members for their innovative educational programs that help families and individuals understand the link between clean and safe homes and good health.

The award honors outstanding educational programming efforts that utilize any of SDA's educational materials and promote the connection between cleanliness and health. Programs must demonstrate innovative outreach efforts that impact the local community and raise the awareness of the proper use and storage of cleaning products. Program areas include but are not limited to laundry, dishwashing, hard-surface cleaning, hand hygiene, asthma education, emergency preparedness, programming with family day homes and child care centers, youth groups and clubs.

Congratulations to this year's recipients:

Ms. Recker Helps Baby Boomers Reduce the Clutter

Are you struggling with midlife clutter? If so, you should consider trying Nancy Recker's method of clutter reduction. Ms. Recker is an Extension educator for Ohio State University. Her program, which is rooted in research, aims to help baby boomers manage, dispose of, and store clutter. The process helps participants reduce stress, increase energy, and enhance relationships as they go through the aging process.

Ms. Shelby and Ms. Wright Help Youth Wage War on Body Odor

Junior high can be a troublesome and awkward time for youth, partly due to changes taking place in the body – like body odor. Well, have no fear, because General Hygiene and Major Pain, a.k.a. The Bod Squad, are here to Wage War on Odor. Beverly Shelby and Denise Wright, of the University of Tennessee Extension, have created this fun and less embarrassing personal hygiene program for youth. Throughout the lessons, students will come to understand what causes body odor, and how to combat it to be squeaky clean and odor free.

Food Safety for People with Diabetes

Susceptibility to infections makes safe food-handling essential

Diabetes strikes people of all ages. Approximately 7 percent of the U.S. population – both children and adults – has the disease.

Food safety, while important for everyone, is of particular concern for those with diabetes. Diabetes can affect various organs and systems of the body, causing them to function improperly. For example, the immune system may not readily recognize harmful bacteria or other types of pathogens. Impairments to stomach and kidney functions can mean that the body holds onto these pathogens longer and allows them to grow. All of this means increased susceptibility to infection.

To avoid contracting foodborne illness, those who suffer from diabetes, as well as their caregivers, must be especially vigilant when handling, preparing, and consuming food. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some basic steps for food safety.

- **Clean:** Wash hands and food preparation surfaces often.
- **Separate:** Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from other foods in the shopping cart, grocery bags, refrigerator and on preparation surfaces.
- **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to ensure that all foods are cooked or reheated to the proper temperature.
- **Chill:** Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, and other perishables within two hours of cooking or purchasing – within one hour if the temperature outside is above 90°F.

For additional information about food safety and diabetes, the publication *Food Safety for People with Diabetes* can be downloaded in PDF format by visiting www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Food_Safety_for_Diabetics.pdf.

Cleaning Product Safety

Science and Research Are Stronger than Fear

Proper use of cleaning products serves a critical role in preventing the spread of infectious disease, ensuring good health and controlling allergy and asthma triggers. Responsible manufacturers ensure that their products go through comprehensive, extensive risk assessments, and also review scientific developments and monitor product-use data that may affect the safety assessment process. An incredible amount of research and development goes on before these products ever hit the shelves, not to mention that the products must meet certain federal and state quality and safety regulations, states Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

These products are used safely and effectively in homes, schools, businesses, and healthcare settings every day, yielding improvements in both hygiene and overall quality of life. Key to safety and effectiveness are three simple words: Use as directed. This means:

- Read the label carefully
- Use the product properly
- Store the product securely

A recent report, based in part on outdated databases that malign ingredients commonly found in cleaning products, has received media attention. To help consumers make informed, educated decisions about their use of cleaning products, SDA has launched a new micro website, CleaningProductsFacts.com. It offers quick, useful, fact-based information on the human health and environmental safety of cleaning products.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: My friend insists that it's best to use hot water for removing stains. Is she right?

A: With hot water, you run the risk of setting the stain. Cool water (85° to 100°F or 29° to 38°C) is generally the best choice because it is gentle on fabrics, minimizes chances of dye loss and won't set the stain. However, before tackling the stain, check the item's care label.

Nancy Bock is Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association

Q: How do I remove Halloween makeup stains from my kids' clothes?

A: Face paint or other makeup is becoming more popular than masks at Halloween. It's fun to use and it's also safer because it doesn't obstruct kids' vision like a mask does. Pretreat stains with a prewash stain remover, and then launder according to the garment's care label instructions.

Clean Ideas

Clean Ideas: The Well-stocked Laundry Closet

Have the right products on hand to avoid a laundry emergency

Detergent is the mainstay of your laundry closet. All-purpose laundry detergents come in two forms: liquid, which is especially effective on food, greasy and oily soils, and also for pretreating spots and stains; and powder, which is ideal for general washday loads. They are also available with additives such as bleach and fabric softener, and in formulas designed for specific use, such as cold-water wash or high-efficiency washing machines. But for optimum washday results, here are some other products to have on hand.

- 1. Oxygen bleach.** Although it is often referred to as all-fabric bleach, it isn't recommended for silk, wool, acetate, and some flame-retardant fabrics. Read the fabric care label to be sure it's safe for the fabric.
- 2. Chlorine bleach.** It's designed to take out stains, but can remove color too. It also acts as a disinfectant, which is why it's recommended for items like baby bibs, dishcloths and cloth diapers. Read the fabric care label to be sure it's safe for the fabric.
- 3. Enzyme presoak.** It can be especially effective in removing protein stains, like baby formula, blood, body fluids, dairy products, eggs, and grass. When added to the wash water, it also boosts the cleaning power of the detergent.
- 4. Fabric softener.** Decreases static cling, which can be especially useful when washing permanent-press and synthetic fibers. Fabric softener is designed to make fabrics softer and fluffier, reduce drying time, reduce wrinkling, and make ironing easier. There are two versions: one goes into the final rinse cycle; the other goes in the dryer.
- 5. Prewash soil and stain removers.** Available as liquids, sprays, gels, sticks, and soap bars. They can be effective in pretreating heavily soiled and stained garments, especially those made from polyester fibers. They can also work well on oil-based stains like animal fats, body soils, cooking oils, cosmetics, and motor oils. Soap bars can work well on fabric softener, perspiration and tobacco stains.
- 6. Starches, fabric finishes, and sizings.** Available as powders, liquids, and sprays, these products are designed to give body to fabrics, make them more soil-resistant, and make ironing easier.