

WSU Asotin County Extension

Balancing Life Newsletter

www.asotin.wsu.edu

August 2011

Handwashing: count 20

Cold “remedies” come and go, but handwashing remains the No. 1 infection fighter

University of California, Berkeley, Wellness Letter

How long does it take you to wash your hands? If you follow recommendations from the CDC, you’re supposed to lather up and rub all surfaces of your hands together for 20 seconds—the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. According to the World Health Organization, the whole process, from washing to drying your hands, should take 40 to 60 seconds.

Proper handwashing is the single best way to prevent colds and many other infectious diseases. Soap and water, along with the friction of rubbing your hands together, loosens dirt and creates a slippery surface so germs slide off.

You should wash your hands before and after eating or preparing food (particularly raw meat, fish, and eggs), after using the toilet, after blowing your nose, after changing a diaper, after playing with pets or cleaning up their waste, before and after touching someone who is sick or treating a wound, before putting in contact lenses, and after gardening.

Here’s more advice to take in hand:

Does the water temperature matter?

There’s little research, but two studies suggest that water temperature has no significant effect on reducing bacteria under normal handwashing conditions. A downside to hot water is that it can irritate skin. Hotter water does cut through oil on your hands faster, but cooler water will also do the job.

How should you dry your hands?

Drying your hands reduces bacteria levels further, but it’s debatable whether using paper or cloth towels or a warm-air dryer is best. A study from the Mayo Clinic in 2000 found no differences between these methods in terms of removing bacteria from hands; other research suggests paper towels are more



effective. If you use a dryer, keeping your hands still removes more bacteria than rubbing them together.

The new ultra-rapid dryer, the Air-blade, is an efficient way to dry your hands: According to a recent study funded by the manufacturer, it removes as much bacteria in 10 seconds as a conventional dryer does in 30 seconds.

Whichever method you use, the key is to make sure your hands are fully dry—hands that remain wet are more likely to transfer bacteria to and from the next surface you touch.

(continued on next page)

Asotin County Extension Office
PO Box 9 • 135 2nd St., B107
Asotin, WA 99402
Phone: 509-243-2009, Fax: 509-243-2018, MG: 509-243-2034
Email: pbrowning@co.asotin.wa.us
Web Site: www.asotin.wsu.edu
Office hours: M-F, 8 :00-11:30, 12:30-5:00

Washington State University Extension helps people develop leadership skills and use research-based knowledge to improve their economic status and quality of life. Cooperating Agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Asotin County. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension Office.



Washington's kids among least protected in the nation, says first-ever report

Kindergarteners in Washington State have highest immunization exemption rates

OLYMPIA — Washington kindergarteners do not meet state or national goals for any required immunizations when they enter school, according to a report today by [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6021a4.htm). (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6021a4.htm). Our state has the highest exemption rate in the country; 6.2 percent of kindergarteners have a parent-signed exemption form for one or more vaccines. Washington's exemption rates have more than doubled over the last 10 years.

"All parents want their kids to have a healthy start," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky, "and making sure they have all of their immunizations before going to school is one of the best ways to keep them healthy. Kids who aren't fully immunized aren't fully protected."

The data from the 2009 – 2010 school year show that our state's kindergarten coverage for required vaccines (including polio, whooping cough, measles, hepatitis B, and chickenpox) ranges from 88 percent to 93 percent. The state and national goal for individual vaccines at kindergarten entry is 95 percent.

Immunizations save lives. Diseases can spread quickly in schools and child care centers, and we've had outbreaks of whooping cough, measles, and other diseases in our state recently. Unimmunized children are more likely to

get and spread diseases that vaccines can prevent.

"Most of today's parents weren't around



to see how bad diseases like measles and whooping cough were before vaccines helped bring them under control," says Secretary Selecky. "We've done a good job fending off those diseases with vaccines, but we can't be complacent; we're seeing them start to make a comeback and too many of our kids are vulnerable."

A new state law that takes effect on July 22 changes the process to get an immunization exemption. It says that if a parent or guardian wants to exempt their child from school or child care immunization requirements, they must first get information from a licensed health care provider about the benefits and risks of vaccinations. The provider must then sign a form or letter confirming that the parent got this information and the form must be turned in to the school

or child care.

Health officials hope the law will reduce the number of "convenience" exemptions (parents who turn the form in even when their child is vaccinated). School nurses have access to Washington's CHILD Profile Immunization Registry to help parents turn in complete and accurate immunization records.

More information on the law (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/schools/default.htm) is available online. Renewed commitment of many public and private partners including school nurses, health care providers, health insurance providers, local health agencies, and others is vital to improving our exemption rates.

All recommended vaccines for kids under 19 are provided at no cost through the state's Childhood Vaccine Program. Health care providers can charge an office visit or administration fee; this may be waived for those who are unable to pay. Parents are urged to go to their regular health care provider for childhood immunizations and questions about vaccines. For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, contact the local health agency (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) in your community or call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Our state and county coverage and exemption rate data (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/schools/reportdataintro.htm) are online. More information on childhood immunizations is on the Department of Health [immunization program website](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize) (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize). The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for a *healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

Hands

(continued from front page)

Is hand sanitizer a good substitute?

Handwashing is generally preferable, but alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a convenient option when soap and water are not available. They kill most bacteria and viruses on contact, but not bacterial spores. Look for products with at least 60 percent alcohol (ethanol and/or isopropanol).

Dirt, food, and other grime on your hands make the alcohol in hand sanitizers less effective, however, so if your hands are visibly dirty or greasy, you're better off washing them. Handwashing is also recommended instead of sanitizers after going to the bathroom and before and after handling food. If you use a hand sanitizer gel, rub about a dime-size amount over all the surfaces of your fingers and hands until they are dry.

What about antibacterial soaps?

We don't recommend them for ordinary household use. Soaps that contain anti-bacterial agents (most commonly, triclosan) kill or inhibit bacteria, as well as help physically remove them. But there's concern that such soaps contribute to the growing problem of bacterial resistance, which is causing many essential antibiotics to become ineffective. Also, though triclosan is not known to be hazardous to humans, the FDA is reviewing its safety because studies in lab animals have shown it to have hormone-disrupting effects. Regular soap and water are all you need.

What should you do if you can't wash your hands?

The aim of washing is to get the germs off your hands so that they won't get into your body (or be passed on to others). If you can't wash your hands right away—and if you don't have hand sanitizer—take special care not to rub or scratch your eyes or nose or touch your mouth.

Food Safety and Preservation

Handling Food Safely on the Road

USDA web site (www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Handling_Food_Safely_on_the_Road/index.asp)

V-A-C-A-T-I-O-N! Oh, how we long for that eight letter word every summer, when millions of us eagerly get away from school and work. We take to the road in cars or recreational vehicles; live on boats; relax in beach or mountain vacation homes; and camp.

No matter where we go or what we do, there is a common denominator that runs through all of our summer travels and relaxation — it's called F-O-O-D!

The "road" to food safety, however, can either be a bumpy one or smooth — depending on what precautions are taken handling meals as we travel during the summer.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's nationwide, toll-free Meat and Poultry Hotline reminds everyone that some simple, common-sense food safety rules can save a vacation from disaster.

Following this advice could make the difference between a vacation to remember and one that is remembered because people got sick from improperly handled food.

Here are some general rules for keeping food safe when traveling.

PLAN AHEAD

If you are traveling with perishable food, place it in a cooler with ice or freezer packs. When carrying drinks, consider packing them in a separate cooler so the food cooler is not opened frequently. Have plenty of ice or frozen gel-packs on hand before starting to pack food. If you take perishable foods along (for example, meat, poultry, eggs, and salads) for eating on the road or to cook at your vacation spot, plan to keep everything on ice in your cooler.

PACK SAFELY

Pack perishable foods directly from the refrigerator or freezer into the cooler. Meat and poultry may be packed while it is still frozen; in that way it stays colder longer. Also, a full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled. Be sure to keep raw meat and poultry wrapped separately from cooked foods, or foods meant to be eaten raw such as fruits.

If the cooler is only partially filled, pack the remaining space with more ice. For long trips to the shore or the mountains, take along two coolers — one for the day's immediate food needs, such as lunch, drinks or snacks, and the other for perishable foods to be used later in the vacation. Limit the times the cooler is opened. Open and close the lid quickly.

Now, follow these food safety tips:

WHEN CAMPING

Remember to keep the cooler in a shady spot. Keep it

covered with a blanket, tarp or poncho, preferably one that is light in color to reflect heat.

Bring along bottled water or other canned or bottled drinks. Always assume that streams and rivers are not safe for drinking. If camping in a remote area, bring along water purification tablets or equipment. These are available at camping supply stores.

Keep hands and all utensils clean when preparing food. Use disposable moist towelettes to clean hands. When planning meals, think about buying and using shelf-stable food to ensure food safety.

WHEN BOATING

If boating on vacation, or out for the day, make sure the all-important cooler is along.

Don't let perishable food sit out while swimming or fishing. Remember, food sitting out for more than 2 hours is not safe. The time frame is reduced to just 1 hour if the outside temperature is above 90 °F.

Now, about that "catch" of fish — assuming the big one did not get away. For fin fish: scale, gut and clean the fish as soon as they are caught. Wrap both whole and cleaned fish in water-tight plastic and store on ice. Keep 3-4 inches of ice on the bottom of the cooler. Alternate layers of fish and ice. Cook the fish in 1-2 days, or freeze. After cooking, eat within 3-4 days. Make sure the raw fish stays separate from cooked foods.

Crabs, lobsters and other shellfish must be kept alive until cooked. Store in a bushel or laundry basket under wet burlap. Crabs and lobsters are best eaten the day they are caught. Live oysters can keep 7-10 days; mussels and clams, 4-5 days.

Caution: Be aware of the potential dangers of eating raw shellfish. This is especially true for persons with liver disorders or weakened immune systems. However, no one should eat raw shellfish.

WHEN AT THE BEACH

Plan ahead. Take along only the amount of food that can be eaten to avoid having leftovers. If grilling, make sure local ordinances allow it.

Bring the cooler! Partially bury it in the sand, cover it with blankets, and shade it with a beach umbrella.

Bring along disposable moist towelettes for cleaning hands.

If dining along the boardwalk, make sure the food stands frequented look clean, and that hot foods are served hot and cold foods cold. Don't eat anything that has been sitting out in the hot sun for more than 2 hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F) — a real invitation for foodborne illness and a spoiled vacation.

WHEN IN THE VACATION HOME OR THE RECREATION VEHICLE

If a vacation home or a recreational vehicle has not been

Continued on page 4





WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
ASOTIN COUNTY EXTENSION

September 8, 2011

Water Bath Canning
AM and PM Session

September 9, 2011

Freezing and Drying
AM and PM Session

9:00 am—Noon or 1:00 pm—4:00 pm
Boyd Hall • Fairgrounds • Asotin, WA

Food Preserving 101 Workshops

The Asotin County Healthy Coalition and WSU Asotin County Extension have teamed up to bring Lizann Hammond, WSU Benton County Extension Educator, to Clarkston to educate the public about food preservation (basics of spoilage and preservation), introduction to freezing and drying as a method of preservation, and introduction to water bath processing. Each workshop costs \$10 to cover materials. Scholarship available.

Call the Asotin County Extension office for a brochure with more information and a registration form. 509-243-2009.



USDA Looking for information about Food Safety?

The United States Department of Agriculture has created, *Ask Karen* who is available 24-7 to answer your questions. You can access *Ask Karen* from you desktop, laptop or mobile device.

Ask Karen is a knowledge base with information for consumers about preventing foodborne illness, safe food handling and storage, and safe preparation of meat, poultry, and egg products. You can search for nearly 1,500 answers by topic or by product, chat with a live representative or send an email. They recently added the *Mobile Ask Karen* that is optimized for iPhone, iPad, and Android with additional devices to follow. The web site is http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/Ask_Karen/index.asp and mobile phone users can access m.askkaren.gov.



V-a-c-a-t-i-o-n

(Continued from page 3)

used for a while, check leftover canned food from last year. The Meat and Poultry Hotline recommends that canned foods which may have been exposed to freezing and thawing temperatures over the winter be discarded.

Also, check the refrigerator. If unplugged from last year, thoroughly clean it before using. Make sure the refrigerator, food preparation areas, and utensils in the vacation home or in the recreational vehicle are thoroughly cleaned with hot soapy water.

Baking Soda Surprises

What's it doing in your toothpaste, deodorant, antacid, and refrigerator?

University of California, Berkley, Wellness Newsletter

Also known as sodium bicarbonate or bicarbonate of soda, baking soda is best known as a leavening agent, since it's involved in the chemical reaction that causes dough to rise. But this household staple has hundreds of uses.

Baking soda is somewhat alkaline—that is, it has a pH above 7 and thus helps neutralize acids, including acidic scent molecules. That's why baking soda comes in handy, as follows:



▶ An open box of baking soda can help deodorize a refrigerator or room. You can make an air freshener by mixing baking soda and water in a spray bottle.

▶ It has various uses in cooking, not just baking. Adding a pinch to the soaking water of beans speeds the cooking process and helps reduce compounds that cause flatulence. A pinch added to tomato sauce while cooking, or coffee while brewing, reduces acidity. It's also an effective meat tenderizer, since it breaks down proteins.

▶ Because it's a mild abrasive and deodorizer, baking soda is a gentle, inexpensive cleanser for sinks, tiles, toilet bowls, and ovens. And it's a good ingredient in toothpastes, underarm deodorants, and denture soaks. Environmentally safe, baking soda can be used in place of potentially toxic products.

▶ When added to laundry water—about half a cup—it can improve the effectiveness of detergent. Added to the rinse cycle, it can neutralize odors.

▶ Added to bath water, it smoothes dry skin, sunburn, and itching due to poison ivy or mosquito bites. Or it can be applied as a paste (one part water to three parts baking soda).

▶ Added to swimming pools, it can balance the pH and help keep water clear.

▶ Sodium bicarbonate is an effective antacid, but is not recommended because it's so high in sodium: 1,250 milligrams per teaspoon, and 1,100 milligrams in two tablets of Alka-Seltzer. And it may cause acid rebound effect, in which case you end up with worse heartburn.

Things to remember in summer

- NEVER leave a child unattended in a car! EVER!
- Don't leave your pet in the car. It still gets too hot in the car, even with the windows cracked.
- Make sure all animals have proper shading, water and leave indoors during high temperature days.
- Put chilled items in bowls of ice at outdoor BBQs to keep from growing bacteria. (See Vacation Article for exposure time)



If you apply hormones to your skin, be careful not to transfer them to children and pets.

The FDA has received several reports of children showing signs of early puberty after inadvertently being exposed to Evamist, a spray form of estrogen used to treat hot flashes. A number of dogs and cats have also reportedly become hormonal (showing nipple enlargement, for example) after licking estrogen off their owners' hands and arms or rubbing against areas where creams were applied. Wash your hands thoroughly after applying the hormone, let it dry completely before you make contact with anyone, and if possible, cover the treated area. And don't let your pets lick the medicated areas.