

Put Your Hands Together

[Announcer] CDC-TV presents “Health Matters.”

[Dr. John Jernigan] At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we are very interested in preventing transmission of disease in our community.

[Erica Odom] People aren’t washing their hands as often as they say they are or as often as they should. Some scientists estimate that up to 80 percent of all infections are transmitted by hands.

[Dr. John Jernigan] And the germs can live on our hands for quite some time unless we clean them. If we don’t clean them and we go and touch something in the meantime, we can spread those germs to other places or other people, and disease can be spread this way.

[Dr. Casey Barton Behraves] Animals can carry germs that can make people sick, and these germs can be not only on the animal but can be in areas where the animals live, as well.

[Dr. Michael Beach] When people do regular hand washing, especially with children, that you supervise that hand washing so you make sure the children are doing it properly and for the length of time that’s necessary.

[David Delozier] They’re coughing and sneezing onto their hands and touching doorknobs. They’re using shared objects like pencils or toys, and the disease is passed easily from one child to the next.

[Dr. Michael Beach] Try and avoid sneezing into your hand because you just contaminate them and then spread those germs everywhere. Focus on sneezing into your elbow, like this, and then you don’t contaminate your hands. Turn on the water, wet your hands, apply a good amount of soap, and lather up, and then focus on washing your hands for about 20 seconds—about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. Focus on washing the front of your hands, the back, in between the fingers, around the nails, and so on, and then rinse everything off. Use something to wipe your hands after that—preferably something disposable, like a paper towel, and then use that to turn off the tap as well. If you get a chance, use that to also open the door to the bathroom as you’re leaving. The best way to wash your hands is using running water and soap, but sometimes we don’t have that available so think about carrying with you a hand sanitizer. That should have at least 60 percent alcohol content.

[Dr. John Jernigan] It’s important to realize that those agents don’t remove soil and other material that might be on your hands. In that case, you really need to use soap and water.

[Dr. Michael Beach] If you’ve been touching objects all around you all day long just assume that your hands are contaminated, and make sure before you prepare food you wash your hands, before you eat that you wash your hands.

[David Delozier] You can’t emphasize hand hygiene enough; clean hands save lives.

[Dr. John Jernigan] Keeping your hands clean is a very important activity both at home, at school, at work, and in the healthcare setting.

[Erica Odom] Hand hygiene or hand washing is the single most important thing that you can do to help prevent the spread of infection and to stay healthy and well.