

Handwashing and the Fight Against Disease



On March 11, 2020, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** officially classified the current outbreak of COVID-19 as a pandemic — an outbreak of disease on a global scale. While this is not the first pandemic in recent history, the COVID-19 outbreak is unique for having been caused by a novel coronavirus. All previous pandemics resulted from the spread of a novel influenza virus.

CDC Recommendations for Handwashing

Fortunately, the best way to stop a coronavirus from spreading is the same method used to ward off influenza: observing good hygiene. For this reason, it is more important than ever to practice good handwashing. Not only will this help slow the spread of the coronavirus, but continuing these practices will also help prevent future pandemics.

What's the right way to wash your hands? **Here are the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

- **Turn on the faucet:** Wet your hands up to your wrists in running water. The water can be hot or cold – **there is no current evidence** that washing in warm water removes more germs. It is important not to use standing water, though, as standing water can contain germs and can thus recontaminate your hands when rinsing.
- **Lather your hands:** Apply soap to your hands and rub them together until soap bubbles form. Then rub soap onto the backs of your hands, your fingers and fingernails, and your wrists.
- **Scrub your hands:** Scrub your hands and wrists with the lathered soap. Scrubbing your hands creates friction, which allows the soap to pick up dirt and germs from your skin. It is very important to continue scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
- **Rinse your hands:** While scrubbing your hands causes soap to pick up dirt and germs, the now dirty soap will remain on your hands until you rinse it off. Rinse your hands and wrists until all the soap is removed to prevent recontamination.
- **Dry your hands:** Towel your hands dry with a clean cloth or paper towel. This step is just as important as the others as germs transfer more easily to wet hands. Additionally, research shows that using a towel **removes more germs** from your hands. The CDC notes that many organizations recommend drying your hands for at least 20 seconds.

Beyond Coronavirus

While COVID-19 is making headlines, it is not the only illness that spreads through contact with dirty hands. Proper hand hygiene can help prevent the spread of **these common germs:**

- **Influenza**
- **Salmonella**
- **E-coli**
- **Streptococcus**
- **Typhoid**
- **The common cold**



Faucet Handles: a Source of Bacteria?

While faucets are an essential part of good hand hygiene, faucet handles can sometimes harbor the very bacteria handwashing is intended to fight.

In a recent test, Special Pathogens Lab swabbed various faucet handles in the kitchen of a healthcare facility to determine how much bacteria was present on the handles. The results are cause for concern: as many as 2080 colony forming units (CFU) were found per swab.

Benefits of Touchless Faucets

Where practical, installing a touchless electronic faucet is a helpful alternative to a traditional, manually-operated faucet. An electronic faucet senses motion and turns the water on automatically, eliminating the need to touch the faucet during handwashing. Chicago Faucets offers many touchless faucets for a variety of applications, including Alpina, ELR, HyTronic, and other faucets.

Additionally, some faucets from Chicago Faucets, including the HyTronic and E-Tronic 80, offer several programmable modes, including 'scrub mode.' In scrub mode, the faucet dispenses water for 60 seconds. The 60-second run-time provides plenty of time to follow all the steps outlined by the CDC, including ample time to wash not just the hands and wrists but also the elbows. By using scrub mode, a common problem of handwashing can be eliminated: not scrubbing long enough.



Fight Disease with Regular Handwashing

The CDC recommends washing hands before and after handling food, after touching your face, and before and after caring for someone who is ill. Take it one step further by installing electronic faucets to prevent recontamination from faucet handles after handwashing.

Until we have a vaccine for coronavirus, clean hands will remain our best defense.



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