

Personal and household hygiene

FACT

Good hygiene prevents diseases

Many illnesses, especially diarrhoea, come from germs found in human and animal faeces. These germs are very small and are not visible to our eyes.

Germs cause illness when they get into the mouth through food, water, dirty hands, dirty utensils or dirty surfaces used for preparing and serving food.

Just rinsing fingers with water is not enough. To kill germs, both hands need to be rubbed with water and soap or ash.

A dirty environment attracts flies, cockroaches, rats and mice which spread germs. A household needs to be kept clean to stop the spread of germs and protect all the family from illness.

Good hygiene practices that prevent the spread of germs include:

- disposing safely of all faeces, ideally using a toilet or latrine
- washing hands with soap (or ash) and clean water
- using clean water from a safe source
- disposing safely of household refuse, e.g. burning, burying, recycling, composting etc.
- keeping animal faeces away from the house, paths, wells, streams and children's play areas.

ACT

Follow good hygiene practices to prevent illness

- ❖ Only use water from a safe source. Safe water sources are water pipes, tube-wells, protected dug-wells and springs. Use clean, covered containers to collect and store water. Wash your hands before collecting water.
- ❖ Build handwashing habits in the family. Make sure that all the family, including children, wash their hands with clean water and soap (or ashes):
 - after using the toilet
 - after cleaning a child's bottom (or any other contact with human excreta)
 - before handling and eating food
 - before feeding children (make sure they wash their hands too)
 - after contact with sick people (e.g. feeding, washing)
 - after touching or handling animals.

- ❖ Dry hands by shaking and rubbing them together or using a clean towel that is kept only for this purpose.
- ❖ All the family should keep their bodies clean through regular bathing and laundering. In particular, children's faces should be washed regularly and thoroughly with clean water to prevent eye infections.

Keep your house and yard clean to stop the spread of germs that carry illness

- ❖ Dispose of all faeces safely:
 - Use a toilet or latrine and keep it clean and free of flies.
 - Teach small children to use a potty. Put children's faeces in the latrine.
 - If it is not possible to use a toilet or latrine, the faeces should be buried immediately. Everyone should always defecate well away from houses, paths, water sources and places where children play.
- ❖ Keep the surrounding area of the house free from animal faeces and other rubbish.
- ❖ Put rubbish in a covered bin, bury it or burn it, so it does not attract flies and other pests.

OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

BE CAREFUL! Make sure there is no water where mosquitoes can breed (e.g. ponds, containers). Outside the house, cover water barrels and turn empty containers upside down so they do not collect water.

PASS IT ON! Train your children to practise good hygiene. For instance, show them how and when to wash hands and how to keep the environment clean. Build daily habits.

CHECK that your children's school has proper handwashing facilities and latrines.