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### Did you wash your hands?

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Despite widespread knowledge of the importance of handwashing, there is still room for improvement. A study showed that only 31% of men and 65% of women wash their hands after using a public restroom.

For kids, washing hands can be a fun and entertaining activity. It is simple enough for even very young children to understand. Handwashing gives children and adults a chance to take an active role in their own health. Once kids learn how to properly wash their hands and wash the fresh fruits and vegetables they eat, they can, and often do, show and encourage their parents and siblings to wash hands, too.



The sad fact is that many adults do not seem to believe that hand washing and washing fresh produce is important! This sometimes includes those that prepare our foods! Many of us have had our own experience with lapses in handwashing hygiene which often results in a mild to moderate form of the common cold, diarrhea, or the flu. But from time to time we do hear about outbreaks of much scarier illnesses, therefore, we owe it to our families to promote the effective and simple skill of hand washing.

#### Keep Your Family Healthy By:

- Teaching them good handwashing techniques (see below)
- Reminding kids to wash their hands
- Washing your own hands with your kids before preparing, serving or eating food

Don't forget to "tattle" on yourself once in a while, "Oops! I almost forgot to wash my hands first!" Sometimes sharing about mistakes you've made in a funny and forgiving way and talking about why you will do it differently is more effective than pretending you do the right thing all the time. Washing your hands is the best way to stop germs from spreading. Think about all of the things that you touched today...from the telephone to the toilet. Maybe you blew your nose in a tissue and then went outside to play with your dog. Whatever you did today, you came into contact with germs. It's easy for a germ on your hand to end up in your mouth. Think about how many foods you eat with your hands. Here are some handy hints for properly washing your hands:

1. Use warm water
2. Use whatever soap you like. Antibacterial soaps are OK to use, but regular soap works just fine!
3. Work up some lather on both sides of your hands, your wrist, and between your fingers. Don't forget to wash around your nails. This is one place germs like to hide. Wash for about 15-20 seconds....about how long it takes to hum the "Happy Birthday" song.
4. Rinse under warm running water and dry well with a clean towel or disposable paper towel.
5. Turn off the tap with the used towel...not your clean hands!

### What if I don't have soap and clean running water?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do NOT eliminate all types of germs.

## Let's Talk

Keep in mind that children are visual learners. This means they learn best by seeing and doing...rather than just hearing. Children are most likely to follow and remember a parent's instructions when the adult uses songs and other activities to turn hand washing and washing fruits and vegetables into a fun memorable game. Go to the library and find a book about germs and handwashing, look at pictures of germs, make a poster for the bathroom and kitchen about washing hands and produce.

## Physical Activity Idea:

Fall is a great time of year to take a trip to a farm stand or the farmers market. Go apple picking at a farm or maybe at a neighbor's. Try different types and varieties of fruits and vegetables. In September Colorado has some great produce that is available which includes: Apples, Beets, Peppers, Cabbage, Cantaloupe, Carrots, Celery, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Grapes, Greens, Herbs, Onions, Peaches, Pears, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Squash, Corn, Tomatoes, and Watermelons. Remember to wash fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running water to remove dirt and germs. Never use soap, but a soft scrub brush is recommended for firm skinned produce like cucumbers, apples and melons, etc.

## Recipe for Health:

### Tomato, Squash and Onion Casserole

1 T olive oil  
3 tsp. minced garlic  
3 small onions sliced  
1 tsp. salt  
1 T each washed fresh thyme, oregano and basil (or 1 tsp. each, dried)  
1 medium zucchini, washed, cut into thin slices (about ½ lb.)  
1 medium yellow squash, washed, cut into thin slices (about ½ lb.)  
6 fresh plum tomatoes, washed, cut into medium slices  
Preheat Oven to 400 F.



1. Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil over medium heat, until onions are tender and browned. Place in oven-proof dish and season with half the salt, pepper and herbs.
2. Arrange zucchini on top of onions, then place a layer of yellow squash next with a layer of tomatoes. Sprinkle with rest of herbs, salt and pepper.
3. Bake, covered for 35 – 40 minutes.
4. Optional, sprinkle with cheese and bake 5 min. or until cheese melts.

Source: Adapted from *Food Family and Fun...a Seasonal Guide to Healthy Eating*, USDA Foods and Consumer Service.