



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## GLOBAL HAND WASHING DAY COMMEMORATION 2018 15 OCTOBER

### 1. Background and purpose

The aim of Global Hand washing Day is to raise awareness on the importance of washing hands with soap as a key approach to disease prevention. The 15 October is dedicated to Global Handwashing advocacy, and to mobilize individuals, households, schools and health establishments, on handwashing and hygiene as a proven intervention to curb life threatening preventable diseases, such as diarrhoea in children.

Germs on the hands are the most common ways that infections are spread and passed into our bodies. These infections can result in food-and/or water-borne illness, if people do not wash hands before food and after using a toilet, as well as infections acquired from health facility treatment, if clinical health Practitioners do not practice safe hand hygiene. Hands are termed, “*the highways to the spread of infection*”.

### 2. The importance of hand washing promotion

Diarrhoea in South Africa is a major public health problem and is one of the main causes of deaths in children under the age of five (5) years. Diarrhoea accounts for 3.4% of total deaths and is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest cause of death.

It is therefore important to re-emphasize and capacitate individuals, communities, schools, and even health facility practitioners on the importance on washing hands with soap at critical times, which according to research can reduce the rate of diarrhoeal infections by almost 50% and acute respiratory diseases by up to 25% in children. When practiced by mothers and birth attendants, can reduce neonatal mortality rates by almost 40%.

Studies have shown that 60% of South Africans do not wash their hands with soap after visiting the toilet or before they eat, and those that do, do not use soap. This means that efforts have to be made to encourage the behaviour and get people to actively engage in good hand hygiene practices, as part of the overall promotion of good health. The 15<sup>th</sup> October therefore provides an opportunity to put the spotlight on the importance of good handwashing and hygiene, and the link to health.

### 3. The THEME for 2018 handwashing campaign

This year, the Global hand washing theme focuses on the links between *handwashing and food* – including food hygiene and nutrition.

Handwashing is an important part of keeping food safe, preventing diseases and helping children growing strong. The 2018 tagline “*Clean Hands- a recipe for health*”, reminds us to make handwashing a part of every meal.

WASH can have a big impact on preventing the underlying causes of undernutrition, such as diarrhoea. Integrating WASH and nutrition allows projects to tackle undernutrition in a more comprehensive way. Doing so can be both efficient and effective.

#### 4. Objectives of the 2018 handwashing campaign

The objectives of the Global Handwashing campaign are to increase awareness on the link between poor hygiene and diseases, and to promote the creation of environments conducive to the promotion of good hygiene practices in schools, homes and in health facilities.

#### 5. How to make a difference during global handwashing day?

Everyone can play a role in promoting good health behaviour through handwashing.

Handwashing is likely to be especially important where children are cared for (e.g. schools, crèches, homes), where people gather (funerals), where sick people are treated (hospitals, clinics), and where food is prepared and sold (restaurants, cafes).

**Here are a few ways you can make a difference this Global Handwashing Day/Ideas for local events:**

##### In schools/Department of Basic Education:

- On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, dedicate 60 minutes to handwashing activities, learning and group activities, particularly amongst Grade RR-Grade 3 pupils;
- Model good handwashing by engaging in group handwashing (*using tippy taps and handwash basins – common bowls are discouraged*) before meal-times;
- Establish places to safely wash hands in school.

##### At home:

- Wash your hands with soap at critical times, especially before eating, cooking, or feeding others;
- Model good handwashing behavior, and remind or help others to always wash their hands after visiting the toilet;
- Make handwashing part of your family meals.

##### In hospitals and clinics:

- Encourage practitioners to prevent health care associated infections by washing hands with soap/disinfecting hands at the “5 key moments to good hand hygiene” to protect patients;
  - »» Before patient contact;
  - »» Before sterile task;
  - »» After body fluid exposure risk;
  - »» After patient contact;
  - »» After contact with patient surroundings.
- Promote effective handwashing behavior amongst mothers of small children attending immunizations and post-natal visits, and women attending ante-natal visits.

##### Communities:

- Establish places to safely wash your hands in your community;
- Educate on and discourage the use of a common bowl for washing hands in funerals and promote the use of Tippy Taps;

##### Food preparation outlets:

- Educate on handwashing before a meal and encourage the use of Tippy Taps in informal food outlets;
- Educate cooks in schools and crèches on the importance of washing hands before preparing meals or serving children.

##### Government:

- Promote effective handwashing behavior change in research, policy, programs, and advocacy by, engaging political leaders and officials responsible for education, infrastructure, health, finance, social affairs at local level on the issue of hygiene, they can help to create a system that supports public health messaging and action.

### The media

- Engage the general public and disseminate information on the importance of washing hands with soap;
- Use social media platforms and use the # clean hands- a recipe for good health.

### Religious leaders

- Hold outreach event with local children;
- Host an entertainment event promoting cleanliness, better health through handwashing;
- Perform fundraising and advocacy to build handwashing stations in local schools or public places, and supply them with soap and water.

## 6. Key messages and slogans

The 2018 campaign key messages are as follows;

- Diarrhoea is responsible for the loss of hundreds of millions of school days every year; handwashing with soap can reduce diarrheal disease by nearly half.
- The handwashing habits you teach in schools will last a lifetime.

### 2018 Slogans

- *“Wash hands after visiting the toilet, it’s the health thing to do”;*
- *“Don’t feed them germs, wash hands before preparing meals”;*
- *“Do not take the loo with you, wash hands before leaving the toilet”.*

## 7. Handwashing promotion in areas without water supply and handwashing facilities are not available

Promote the use of easy-to-use, locally appropriate handwashing stations made of local materials, such as the Tippy tap.

**Tippy Taps** are made using cans or plastic bottles that release a small amount of water—just enough for a clean hand wash—each time they are tipped.



## 8. Water alone is not enough

Washing hands with water alone, a common practice around the world, is significantly less effective than washing hands with soap. Proper handwashing requires soap and only a small amount of water.



Soap breaks down germ carrying grease and dirt, and facilitates rubbing and friction. With proper use, all soaps are equally effective at rinsing away the germs that cause disease.

## 9. Promoting your event

Ask local media to report on the local impact of poor hygiene and handwashing. Make yourself or other experts available to speak on local radio or TV shows.

Issue a media advisory and press release to encourage coverage of your event.

Publicise your event to community calendars, on TV, and through community centers, and neighborhood markets.

Add event information to your institutions website, social network sites, your newsletter.

**“Clean Hands- a Recipe for Health”**