



Jeb Bush
Governor

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Secretary

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DOH PROMOTES NATIONAL HAND WASHING AWARENESS WEEK

-December 4-10 to recognize proper hand washing steps that eliminate disease-causing bacteria and germs-

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) recognizes National Hand Washing Awareness Week on December 4-10 by encouraging Floridians to thoroughly wash their hands to reduce harmful bacteria and viruses from entering the body through their eyes, nose or mouth.

“By washing hands properly and following the suggested hand washing principles, Floridians may indeed reduce their risks of contracting influenza,” said DOH Secretary M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D. “There are a number of microorganisms that can spread disease, but washing hands with soap and water will help to alleviate flu-like diseases as well as any germs you may pick up or spread with your hands.”

It is important to wash your hands often, even when they are not visibly dirty. Here are some of the times that you should wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after you prepare food
- Before you eat
- After using the restroom
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After caring for someone who is sick
- After changing diapers
- After leaving the playground
- After blowing your nose or sneezing and coughing
- Whenever your hands are visibly dirty
- **DO NOT** cough or sneeze into your hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow to avoid spreading germs with your hands.
- Above all, **DO NOT** put your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth!

Educators and parents can encourage children to participate and excel in hand washing awareness by downloading the “4 Principles of Hand Awareness” at www.henrythehand.com, and making a pledge to become “Champion Hand Washers.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 36,000 people die from the flu each year. Many of these deaths can be related to poor hand washing. This national initiative was put into place to educate adults and children about the need to cleanse hands regularly in order to

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2/ Hand Washing Awareness:



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reduce the number of common colds.

Frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Proper handwashing can remove harmful bacteria and viruses, which can be present on hands. To properly wash your hands, use the following technique:

1. Place your hands together under warm water.
2. Apply liquid or clean bar soap to your hands.
3. Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds (this is equivalent to singing the "Happy Birthday" song two times). Clean all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, fingers, and under the fingernails.
4. Rinse the soap from your hands.
5. Dry your hands completely with a clean towel (disposable if possible). Pat your skin rather than rubbing to avoid chapping and cracking.
6. If you use a disposable towel, throw it in the trash.

DOH promotes and protects the health and safety of all people in Florida through the delivery of quality public health services, prevention of disease and the promotion of health care standards. For further information, please visit DOH's Web site at www.doh.state.fl.us and select Food and Waterborne Disease Surveillance from the drop box.

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