

MSU Study Finds People Are Poor Hand Washers



There are many things you can do to avoid getting the flu or passing it along to others if you're already sick. One of the easiest and most basic is washing your hands. But a study found that too many people don't wash their hands properly if they do it at all.

Researchers from Michigan State University observed hand washing behaviours in public restrooms across a college town and categorized such behaviours three ways:

- No washing, that is, leaving the restroom without washing or rinsing hands;
- Attempted hand washing, that is, wetting hands without using soap; and
- Washing with soap.

They also timed how long people kept their hands under running water during the entire hand washing process.

Of the 3,749 people observed:

- 66.9% used soap when washing their hands
- 23% attempted to wash their hands without soap
- 10.3% didn't try to wash their hands at all.

And although it's recommended that you rub your soaped hands for 15-20 seconds before rinsing about how long it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice only 5% spent more than 15 seconds washing, rubbing and rinsing their hands.

According to the CDC, to properly wash your hands for the most effective cleaning, you should:

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.

- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

When should you wash your hands to avoid catching or spreading contagious illnesses such as the flu? According to WorkSafeBC, you should thoroughly wash your hands:

- Before, during and after you prepare food
- Before eating
- After using the restroom
- After sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose
- After touching your eyes, ears, nose or mouth
- After touching commonly used items.

SafetyPoster.com has a poster on hand washing featuring The Simpsons that you can buy and hang in your workplace as a humorous reminder to workers. And watch this video on the importance of hand washing in a healthcare setting.