Safety Talk Handout – Hand Washing for Health

As we are in the middle of cold and flu season and a horrible respiratory virus is sweeping through Regina, hitting one school particularly hard, we thought it would be a good time to remind you of the single most effective way to achieve a healthy you and a healthy campus:

**Hand Washing!**

Infectious materials and organisms such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites are all around us including, but not limited to, on our skin, in the kitchen sink, on doorknobs, etc. Most people get sick when they touch something that is contaminated and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Infectious agents can pass from one person’s hands to another and spread diseases.

**Interesting Facts:**

- **Soap is the BEST way to remove germs** from your hands and prevent the spread of disease. If you want to be sick less often, proper hand washing decreases your risk of diarrhea by 50% and the risk of catching a cold or flu by 33%!

- **Germs can live on hard surfaces for up to 8 hours, even if it looks clean and dry!**
  Do you know who or what touched the elevator buttons, door handles, or desk last? Regularly clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

- **4/5 people don’t wash their hands properly or at all!** Let’s change this statistic! Do you know what the person before you was doing in the bathroom stall? Always wash your hands before leaving the bathroom, regardless of what you were doing in there.

**Hand Washing: The Right Way:**

How do you ensure you reduce your risk of getting sick and the spread of germs? It all starts with knowing when and how to wash your hands and what to do when you don’t have access to soap and water.

**WHEN SHOULD I WASH OR SANITIZE MY HANDS?**

- Before and after food preparation or eating
- Before leaving the bathroom
- After coughing or sneezing in your hands, & blowing your nose
- After visiting someone who is sick
- After changing diapers
- After handling animals and their waste
HOW:

1. **WET** your hands with running water. The water temperature doesn’t matter.
2. **LATHER** with soap & rub your hands for **20 seconds**.
3. **SCRUB** all surfaces of hands including backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails (with a nail brush if available).
4. **RINSE** hands in clean running water for at least 10 seconds. The water temperature is not important.
5. **DRY** hands with a clean towel.

*Diagram taken from Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety*

**Additional Steps:**
- Cover cuts or open sores on your hands with a clean plastic bandage.
- **Ensure your vaccinations are up-to-date:** It is easy and low-cost and, most importantly, it saves lives. For more information: [http://www.rqhealth.ca/department/adult-immunization/adult-immunization](http://www.rqhealth.ca/department/adult-immunization/adult-immunization)

**Hand Sanitizing: The Right Way**

What to do in between washing your hands with soap and water:
We have many hand sanitizer stations around campus.

Look for this sign and you have instant access to clean hands!

HOW TO USE:
1. **WET** your hands with hand sanitizer
2. **SCRUB** all surfaces of hands including backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails for **30 seconds**.
3. Allow hands to air dry.

**NOTE:** Hand sanitizer cannot penetrate dirt and grime. If your hands are visibly dirty, wash them with soap and water.

**Protect Yourself and Prevent the Spread of Disease**

When used properly, hand sanitizer (containing minimum 70% alcohol) kills many of the germs on your hands (good and bad) but it is not effective against all types of germs. Proper hand washing removes all germs. Thus, cleaning with hand sanitizer should supplement regular hand washing, not replace it.

*A safe and healthy environment protects students, faculty and staff from injury and illness, which is vital to achieving our mission as a University!*

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Questions or for more information

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