



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Thursday, May 18, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Director
PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
727-824-6908 (for media use only)

Information for parents and childcare providers
Why hand-washing is so important

Children may not always listen when adults tell them to wash their hands, but it's a message worth repeating. Hand-washing is by far the best way to prevent germs from spreading and to keep you and your kids from getting sick. Here, from your **Pinellas County Health Department**, is some information to help explain the importance of hand-washing.

Germs such as bacteria and viruses can be transmitted several different ways, especially by touching dirty hands or changing dirty diapers.

Other ways germs spread include:

- through contaminated water and food
- through contaminated surfaces
- through droplets released during a cough or a sneeze
- through a sick person's body fluids or fecal matter

If kids pick up germs from one of these sources, they can unknowingly become infected simply by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. And once they're infected, it's usually just a matter of time before the whole family comes down with the same illness.

Good hand washing is your first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses - and not just the common cold. More serious illnesses such as meningitis, influenza, hepatitis A, and most types of infectious diarrhea can be stopped with the simple act of washing your hands.

Here are some simple steps for scrubbing those germs away. Demonstrate this routine to your child - or better yet, wash your hands together with your child several times a day so he or she learns how important this good habit is.

- Wash your hands in warm water. Make sure the water isn't too hot for little hands.
- Use soap and lather up for about 15 to 20 seconds. Make sure you get in between the fingers and under the nails where uninvited germs like to hang out. And don't forget the wrists!
- Rinse and dry well with a clean towel.

(MORE)

IMPORTANCE OF HAND WASHING – Page 2



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

If your child is reluctant about hand washing, try these suggestions:

- Use colorful soap made especially for kids. Some soap – bar soap and soap in pump bottles – also comes in interesting colors or have fun scents or foaming action to make hand washing fun.
- Have your child sing a favorite song while lathering up. By the time the tune is done, those germs should be washed away.

To minimize the germs passed around your family, make frequent hand washing a rule for everyone, especially:

- before eating and cooking;
- after using the bathroom (studies have shown that one in three people do not wash their hands after using the bathroom);
- after cleaning around the house;
- after touching animals, including family pets;
- after visiting or taking care of any sick friends or relatives;
- after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing; and
- after being outside (playing, gardening, walking the dog, etc.)

Don't underestimate the power of hand washing! The few seconds you spend at the sink with your child could save you trips to the doctor's office.

For more information about hand washing and disease prevention, visit www.pinellashealth.com or www.cdc.gov.

###

The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.
www.PinellasHealth.com