

Quick Health Teachings

THAT SAVE LIVES

Hand Hygiene

Materials:

Glitter
Thick petroleum-based lotion
Plastic knife for distributing lotion
Water pitcher and basin (or similar hand-washing set-up)
Soap

Objectives:

Demonstrate how germs spread
Demonstrate importance of using poured/running water (not standing water in a basin) and soap to wash hands

Activity:

Use the plastic knife to place a small-moderate amount of lotion on each student's hand. Have them rub the lotion all over their hands and fingers. You want the lotion to cover their hands, but not be so thick they can't wash it off.

Pour a small amount glitter on the hands of a few volunteer students or teachers (maybe 1 out of every 5 participants) and have them rub their hands together to spread the glitter on the front and backs of their hands.

Have the volunteers "spread" the glitter to other people by vigorously shaking hands or rubbing their hands on other people's hands.

Set up one or two hand-washing stations where someone pours clean water and holds a basin to catch dirty water. Have all students wash their hands, first in just water, then using soap and water.

Teaching:

"Many sicknesses (especially coughs and diarrhea) are transmitted by tiny *germs* called bacteria or viruses. These germs can easily spread from person to person, making more people sick. This activity will demonstrate how. We are going to put germs on a few volunteers, and then they are going to shake your hand and pass the germs on to you! Your job is to wash the germs off so you don't get sick or keep spreading the sickness. First try washing them off with ONLY water. Next, try using soap and water."

Potential Spiritual Application:

Spread of sin, faithlessness, disobedience, or fear. Need for more than just our own efforts (water) to get rid of sin – we need Jesus/Holy Spirit (soap).

Notes:

- If this is part of a long teaching day, do this activity before a snack or meal as a fun break from other teachings. Then make sure the "teachers" continue to quietly demonstrate good hand hygiene for other meals!

- Learn the local culture's hand washing customs and incorporate it if possible (e.g. Ethiopian coffee ceremonies always start with water poured over hands, but this teaching introduces soap. Filipino

villagers swish their hands in a shared basin of water before meals, but this teaching introduces pouring clean water over each person's hands).

- If glitter continues to show up on tables, doorknobs, and clothing days later, point out difficult it is to wash off all germs, and how easily they are spread.

- Have fun and be enthusiastic so everyone else will also have fun. This teaching is still used in U.S. hospital settings to remind healthcare workers of the importance of good hand washing.

STATS (World Health Organization):

80% of common infections are spread by hands (World Health Organization)

Teaching people about handwashing helps them and their communities stay healthy. Handwashing education in the community:

- Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23-40% [2](#), [3](#), [6](#)
- Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58% [4](#)
- Reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 16-21% [3](#), [5](#)
- Reduces absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness in schoolchildren by 29-57% [7](#)

About 1.8 million children under the age of 5 die each year from diarrheal diseases and pneumonia, the top two killers of young children around the world [8](#).

- Handwashing with soap could protect about 1 out of every 3 young children who get sick with diarrhea [2](#), [3](#) and almost 1 out of 5 young children with respiratory infections like pneumonia [3](#), [5](#).
- Although people around the world clean their hands with water, very few use soap to wash their hands. Washing hands with soap removes germs much more effectively [9](#).
- Handwashing education and access to soap in schools can help improve attendance [10](#), [11](#), [12](#).
- Good handwashing early in life may help improve child development in some settings [13](#).
- Estimated global rates of handwashing after using the toilet are only 19% [6](#).

Myanmar:

Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017 produced by the Central Statistical Organization of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, UNDP and the World Bank. The report, published June of 2018, states that 83 percent of households in Myanmar have access to hand-washing facilities with soap and water. (Myanmar Times)

(Data likely inflated and useless, especially since diarrhea rates increased significantly over the past 10 years)

Diarrhea Doll (Dehydration Demonstration)

Materials:

Empty plastic water bottle and lid with small hole cut in the bottom

Something sharp to create hole (see above)

Cup or pitcher of water (preferably colored with coffee grounds or food coloring so it is easy to see)

Basin for collecting “diarrhea” water (if you are teaching inside)

Objectives:

Demonstrate how diarrhea causes dehydration & how to replace fluids

Activity & Teaching:

Fill the “diarrhea doll” about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water and hold finger over the hole in the bottom

“Pretend this is a person. This person is full of water. Our bodies are made up of 75% water. We need this water to survive.”

Release your finger from the hole in the bottom (and open the top lid if needed) to allow “diarrhea” to slowly flow out the bottom of the bottle.

“When we have diarrhea, we lose a lot of fluid. This fluid is a combination of water and salts”

Allow the water to drain until the bottle is about $\frac{1}{4}$ full, then put your finger back over the hole to stop the flow.

“When you have diarrhea, should you drink more water, or less water than normal?”

Wait for answers

“You need to drink more water than normal to replace the water you’ve lost. If you don’t drink water, the diarrhea will slow down, but that is only because you’ve lost so much water there is nothing more to lose. This is called dehydration and it is very dangerous. More people die from dehydration than from the actual diarrhea.”

Start the “diarrhea” flow again, but have someone pour water into the top of the bottle to demonstrate drinking water.

“You should drink a large glass of water for every episode of diarrhea in addition to the normal water you drink each day. WATER (or breastmilk for babies), not coffee, soda, juice, etc”

Notes:

- If you are also doing a teaching homemade electrolyte solutions or using ORS packets:

“If it is hard to drink water because you feel sick, there are salt & water solutions called _____ (check for the local name – ORS packet, orasol, Pedialyte, etc). These replace the water AND the salt that you lose, and they are easier to drink when your stomach is sick.”

- Practice operating the diarrhea doll ahead of time so you know how fast the flow of diarrhea will be.

- Have fun!

Potential Spiritual Application:

Need for “refilling” as we minister to others. Scripture reading, prayer, Holy Spirit, etc

STATS (World Health Organization)

Dehydration caused by diarrhea is one of the biggest single killers of children in the modern world and diarrhea itself is one of the major causes of nutritional loss and poor growth. **This year, about 2.2 million children will die of dehydration caused by diarrhea** - 80% of them in the first two years of their life. That's 6000 children per day or 4 children every minute.