

Research Article

HAND WASHING IS THE EASIEST WAY AND ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR COVID-19

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Abstract.

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a stark reminder that one effective way to stop the spread of the virus is through hand washing, especially hand washing with soap. As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads around the world, millions of people are beginning to listen carefully to medical experts' advice on the need to wash their hands. A simple procedure such as hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of the disease - not only coronavirus (e.g. COVID-19), but also diarrhea, cholera and typhoid fever.

Keywords: Hand washing, COVID-19, school, organization, sanitation and hygiene.

15 October is World Hand washing Day. It is dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of the importance of hand washing with soap as an effective and affordable way to prevent disease and save lives. This campaign aims to motivate and mobilize people around the world to improve their hand washing habits.

By following the rules of hand hygiene, you protect yourself and others. In order to contribute to slowing down the spread of COVID-19 and protect ourselves and society, each of us must wash our hands thoroughly. This is the main message of World Water Day 2020, which is celebrated on 22 March.

Safe water and sanitation and good hygiene play a vital role in protecting people's health during any outbreak of infectious diseases. The provision of quality and sustainable water supply, sanitation and hygiene services, the maintenance of a clean environment and the proper disposal of waste in communities, homes, schools, shops and markets and health facilities contribute to preventing further spread of the COVID-19 virus. Strict observance of personal hygiene rules - in particular, careful hand washing - is a direct responsibility of each of us, and in healthcare institutions this task becomes extremely important for the protection of both patients and healthcare workers.

Standards of good hygiene require a continuous, sufficient and safe water supply, as well as uninterrupted operation of sanitation systems, even in emergency situations and under heavy loads such as changing climate. In the WHO European Region, an effective multilateral mechanism exists for this purpose - the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Trans boundary Watercourses and International Lakes, adopted in 1992. The main objective of the Protocol is to ensure the protection of human health and well-being within the framework of sustainable development by optimizing water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and countering water-related disease.

"A simple act like washing hands is essential to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases and ultimately save lives," says Oliver Schmoll, Programme Manager for Water and Climate at the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn, Germany. - At the same time, it is important to understand that in order to ensure proper hand hygiene, hospitals, schools and other public facilities need an uninterrupted and safe water supply and proper hand washing and soaping equipment.

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listen carefully to medical experts' advice on the need to wash their hands. A simple procedure such as hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of the disease - not only coronavirus (e.g. COVID-19), but also diarrhea, cholera and typhoid fever.

But for the 3 billion people on the planet who do not have access to clean water and soap, this simple procedure to prevent infection remains inaccessible.

Today, 47% of schools (900 million schoolchildren) do not have the facilities to wash their hands with water and soap. And 16% of health facilities do not have the opportunity to wash their hands next to the toilet or in places where patients receive the necessary medical care.

During the COVID-19 epidemic and outbreaks of other infectious diseases, an effective emergency response can improve access to this simplest form of disease prevention. The World Bank is working closely with countries and partners to ensure that communities have access to inpatient and mobile hand washing devices, soap or alcohol solutions for rubbing hands and to reliable water sources. We also help people understand the importance of hand washing by using educational and behavioral tools and tactics. As we face new, unanticipated challenges related to COVID-19, our teams on the ground also provide direct support in responding to COVID-19 in countries, quickly adapting hygiene promotion to a wider audience, conducting online campaigns given the limitations of personal social mobilization, and focusing on the different ways in which COVID is transferred.

Beginning in 2017, the World Bank's Sustainable Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project is helping rural communities in the country to improve access to better water supply and sanitation services by raising water quality standards: whereas previously citizens had to drink untreated water from ditches or street pumps, they now have access to treated drinking water supplied directly to their homes 24 hours a day. The project also supports the development and implementation of a communication strategy and a series of educational and behavioral campaigns on water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Targeted at the population, the home and children attending school, these campaigns promote the improvement of health and hygiene norms and principles, such as hand washing, the importance of connecting to the water supply and sewerage system, regular payments for uninterrupted service provision, and improved sanitation and hygiene during menstruation. To reach even the most remote areas, the project has hired social mobilization specialists to train rural health committees in water quality, hand washing and hygiene.

Water and sanitation services will play an important role as soon as children return to school after the COVID-19 crisis to maintain preventive hygiene practices and ensure protection against future outbreaks of infectious diseases. The project also supports the response to COVID-19 in the country, among other things: 1) improvement of WOSM facilities at border crossings in rural areas (at medical points where people will be examined before being admitted or sent to surveillance centers or self-isolated), together with the Border Guard Services and the Ministry of Health; 2) support to the Republican Centre of Health in communicating on COVID-19 prevention with medical professionals and the general public, in particular through social networks and SMS messages.

The right of every child to quality education includes the right to a favorable school environment. Access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services are important components of this environment. Children spend a large part of their day at school, where access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services can affect the learning, health and dignity of students, especially girls.

The fact that access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools is included in the Sustainable Development Goals means there is growing recognition of their importance as key components of a safe, violence-free, inclusive and effective learning environment. This part of universal access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene underlines the need for all this outside the home.

In Uzbekistan, on average, there are only 4 hand-washing points in one school. Given the average number of students in a school, this is not enough: during the first half of the day (first shift), on average, for every 168 students in a school, there is only one hand-washing spot; while during the second shift, an average of 84 students are served at a hand-washing spot. The problem is more serious in urban schools with more students than in rural or remote areas.

With regard to water supply and sanitation conditions, only 11% of schools have basic or modern amenities in line with the criteria set out in the joint WHO/UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene-monitoring program. About 32% of schools have inadequate or limited services. The

coverage of basic hygiene services in remote schools was lower than in urban schools.

UNICEF works around the world to ensure that children and families have access to adequate hand washing facilities. Based on the latest data analysis, UNICEF proposes to the Government of Uzbekistan to further improve access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in the country's schools:

- Investments in ensuring adequate conditions of access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools (sufficient number of hand washing facilities with soap in important areas of the school, such as toilets, canteen, medicine cabinet, playgrounds; sufficient facilities for drinking water, women and men's toilets with sufficient water, etc.).

- Adapt innovative ways of providing hand washing, sanitation and other hygiene services based on international best practice, which are cost effective; and

- Actively promote hygiene and health practices in schools, particularly hand washing, especially in the context of COVID-19 requirements.

These initiatives aim to ensure sustainable access to services and supplies, especially in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Literature:

1. <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan>.