

Hygiene¹

Hygiene is the practice of keeping yourself and your surroundings clean, especially in order to prevent illness or the spread of diseases.

Germs

Germs are tiny organisms that can cause disease. Be aware that:

- Flies carry germs and worm eggs to the food you eat. Keep all food covered.
- Dirty hands carry germs to your food and to your mouth. Always wash hands before cooking or preparing food, before eating food and after each bowel movement or urination.
- Germs hide under dirty fingernails. Cut fingernails short each week and keep fingernails clean.
- Germs from stool get into drinking water. Boil all drinking water for 10 minutes after boiling begins to kill germs. Do not urinate or have a bowel movement near the water source.
- Spoiled or undercooked food causes diarrhea. Cook all food well. Buy only fresh food. Do not keep left over food too long.

Hygiene Habits Preventing Worms and Diarrhea

Diarrhea

Many people die of diarrhea every day, yet most of these deaths can be prevented. Diarrhea is most commonly caused by germs (bacteria, viruses, parasites) and these germs can enter the body through hands that are unwashed and have been in contact with the stool of humans or animals.

Germs are present in the stool and vomit of people who are infected. Infected people may contaminate surfaces, objects, food, and drinks with germs, especially if they do not wash their hands thoroughly after using the bathroom. When an infected person with unwashed hands shakes hands with or touches another person, the germ can spread. When an infected person vomits, the germ can become airborne.

People may be infected with germs by:

- touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their mouths.
- sharing food, drink, or eating utensils with infected people.
- eating foods that are contaminated with germs, such as oysters from contaminated waters.
- swallowing airborne particles that contain viruses.

¹ Source: Health for Life Manual for Primary Health Care at YWAM Perth.

Infected people who do not have symptoms can still transmit germs. Germs may be present in the stool up to 2 weeks after a person recovers from gastroenteritis.

When a person has diarrhea, he has many frequent watery or wet stools. With each watery stool, the person loses water from the body. If he does not drink as much water as he loses in the stool, the water in his body will dry up and eventually he will die from loss of water – the body cannot live without water. When water is lost in the stool, salt is also lost and so this must be replaced also.

Signs of dehydration include:

- Sunken eyes, dry mouth, little or no urine, loss of skin tone, a sunken soft spot on the scalp.
- Diarrhea may be accompanied by vomiting and this leads to further loss of water.
- Diarrhea can be prevented by using clean water for cooking and maintaining clean hygiene.

Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is keeping our bodies, our teeth, our hair, and our clothes clean. People should be clean because being clean helps prevent diseases. God is also concerned about our cleanliness.

Basic guidelines:

- Always wash your hands with soap when you get up in the morning, after having a bowel movement, before eating and preparing food. This helps to remove germs that can cause disease that your hands may have come in contact with. If you don't have soap, you can use a mixture of $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried powdered orange peel or dried Papaya leaves or Yucca plant mixed in water to form a paste. Rub this paste all over your hands then rinse off with water. Or you may apply sesame or coconut or other oil to your skin, then wash off with warm water. Use a wash cloth to remove the excess oil. You can use these methods also for bathing.
- Bathe often every day when the weather is hot. Bathe after working hard or sweating. Frequent bathing helps prevent skin infections, dandruff, pimples, itching and rashes. Sick people, including babies, should be bathed daily. Washing your eyes helps prevent eye infections - conjunctivitis and trachoma.
- Wash your hair often to help prevent problems such as lice, ringworm, etc. Ringworm is caused by a tiny germ spread by skin contact with someone who has it or from dirt. Washing can remove the fungus.
- Brush your teeth every day and after each time you eat sweets. If you do not have a toothbrush and toothpaste, rub your teeth with a mixture of half salt and half baking soda. Salt by itself will also work.
- In areas where hookworm is common, do not go barefoot or allow children to do so. Hookworm infection causes severe anemia. These worms enter the body through the soles of the feet.

- Wash your clothes with soap and water and dry them on a line. Hang or spread sheets and blankets in the sun often. Washing clothes and sheets and towels in hot water regularly and hanging in the sun to dry can prevent scabies. If there are bedbugs, pour boiling water on the cots and wash the sheets and blankets□all on the same day.