



# Toolbox Talk: Importance of Hand Washing to Reduce Disease Transmission in the Office

## Introduction/Overview:

Growing up, we were constantly reminded by our parents to wash our hands. Yes, your mom wanted to make sure your hands looked clean, but she also wanted you healthy. One of the best ways to stop the transmission of germs and viruses is to wash your hands properly. Unfortunately, many diseases are transmitted through contact with contaminated surfaces and objects.

## Statistics:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [proper handwashing](#) not only benefits the individual but benefits entire communities by reducing respiratory illnesses by 21%, reducing the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 31%, and reducing diarrheal disease in people with weakened immune systems by 58%.

In an article, [The Effect of Handwashing with Water or Soap on Bacterial Contamination of Hands](#), published in the National Library of Medicine, volunteers deliberately contaminated their hands by touching doorknobs and handrails in public spaces. It was determined that unwashed hands were contaminated 44% of the time. After washing with water, only 23% of the samples were contaminated. However, after appropriate washing of hands with non-antibacterial soap and water, the contamination rate dropped to 8%.

## Talking Points:

Hands should be washed for 20 seconds with soap and water. Ensure you clean the back of your hands, under your nails, and between the fingers.

Wash your hands:

- Before and after work
- Before and after breaks
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using the restroom
- Before and after eating
- Before, during, and after preparing food

If soap and water are not available, use a [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Developed by:

## Additional Discussion Notes:

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### Final Thoughts:

An excellent way to ensure you are washing your hands for the suggested 20 seconds is to sing “Happy Birthday to You” silently to yourself twice. Handwashing will help keep you and your co-workers healthier.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If no one in attendance can answer a question, don't hesitate to get in touch with your Office of Workers' Compensation (OWC) or the Loss Control Innovations (LCI) consultants for assistance.

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### References:

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