

Hand Washing Guidelines for WNEP Teaching

May 2007

The main objective of these guidelines are to help WNEP colleagues design programs which include proper hand washing as a key step in safe food handling and preparation.

Proper Hand Washing

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that hand washing is the most important step in preventing illness. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least **20 seconds** before and after handling food.

- Always wash hands with warm water and soap:
 - before handling food;
 - after handling food;
 - after using the bathroom;
 - after changing a diaper;
 - after tending to a sick person;
 - after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
 - after handling trash; and
 - after handling pets.
- Children and youth should always wash their hands after being outside.
- There are **5 steps** to effective hand washing: 1) wet hands with warm water; 2) apply a few drops of liquid soap (or foam) or grab a bar of soap; 3) scrub for 20 seconds – include the area between fingers, wrists and around nails; 4) rinse thoroughly with warm water; and 5) dry hands on a disposable paper towel. At home, consumers may use a hand towel for drying; never use a hand towel when teaching.

Instant Hand Sanitizers

Instant hand sanitizers, such as Purell®, use alcohol in a gel- or liquid-base to kill bacteria that may be on hands or surfaces. While there are times when it may be appropriate to use an instant hand sanitizer, **they are no substitute for effective hand washing with soap and water.**

Some times when instant hand sanitizers may be useful are when: traveling in the car, after changing a diaper when no bathroom facilities are available, on field trips, before a food demonstration in a room with no kitchen and no easy access to bathrooms. One of the goals of our teaching in WNEP is to model good behavior including proper hand washing using soap and water, if at all possible.

