



Press release – October 15th is Global Handwashing Day

WASHINGTON, DC – Global Handwashing Day is on October 15th. The day is marked by worldwide celebrations, events, and advocacy campaigns. In 2017, more than 500 million people promoted the simple, life-saving act of handwashing with soap on Global Handwashing Day. The day was founded by the Global Handwashing Partnership in 2008 to help communities, advocates, and leaders spread the word about handwashing with soap.

Hands are the leading carriers of germs that cause diarrhea and respiratory infections like pneumonia. Handwashing at critical times – such as before a meal or after using the toilet – stops the spread of disease-causing germs. Consistent handwashing with soap reduces the incidence of diarrhea by nearly half and respiratory infections by 25% among children under 5. Handwashing with soap is a simple, but critical, way to ensure overall health.

This year's Global Handwashing Day theme, "Clean Hands – a recipe for health," emphasizes the linkages between handwashing and food. Handwashing is an important part of keeping food safe, preventing diseases, and helping children grow strong. Yet, handwashing is not practiced as consistently or as thoroughly as it should be. Diarrheal disease limits the body's ability to absorb nutrition from food and is a major cause of death in low resource settings. Handwashing with soap is an effective way to prevent these losses.

Critical food-related times for handwashing with soap include: before cooking or preparing food, before eating, and before feeding someone (including breastfeeding). The contamination of food can lead to a wide range of illnesses and outbreaks, many of which are particularly dangerous for young children and people with compromised immune systems.

Global Handwashing Day raises awareness of the importance of handwashing and encourages action to promote and sustain handwashing habits. Organizations and individuals can celebrate Global Handwashing Day by planning an event, participating in a digital campaign, or simply spreading the word about the importance of handwashing.

The Global Handwashing Partnership is an international coalition of organizations working to promote handwashing with soap.

For more information, please visit www.globalhandwashing.org/global-handwashing-day/

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