



## Celebrating Global Handwashing Day



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WIN-SA aims to capture the innovative work of people tackling real service delivery challenges. It also aims to stimulate learning and sharing around these challenges to support creative solutions. Most importantly, WIN-SA strengthens peer-to-peer learning within the water sector.

### **Global Handwashing Day is held annually on 15 October and is dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of washing hands with soap as a key approach to disease prevention, and to mobilise schools, individuals, communities, households, hospitals, to this great cause.**

The WRC, in collaboration with the National Department of Health and the City of Tshwane paid a visit to Onverwacht Primary School in Cullinan, City of Tshwane to promote good handwashing behaviour on 18 October, and took the learners through the process of handwashing.



*Onverwacht Primary School learners practicing proper handwashing method*

This process is often taken for granted but it is not well understood. The Director General of the National Department of Health has been requested to dedicate the month of October to handwashing to ensure that promotion continues even beyond 15 October.

More recently, the national health department issued a warning following the recent outbreak of the food-borne disease Listeriosis in South Africa. Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said a total of 557 cases had been detected this year alone and at least 36 people have died in the last 11 months. According to the National Department of Health South usually records 60-80 cases a year.

“The bacteria is widely distributed in nature and can be found in soil, water and vegetation. Animal products and fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables can be contaminated from these sources,” Motsoaledi said. Handwashing therefore is critical in preventing the transmission of such illness from one person to another.

In 2009, the WRC commissioned a study to develop a scientific method to assess the effectiveness of hand washing and hand hygiene behaviours. This research resulted in the development of a hand hygiene assessment framework. According to the WRC study, the manner in which individual washes their hands (hand hygiene technique) was an influenced by factors such as individual and environmental behaviours.

The WRC study shows that human hands are one of the chief vehicles of transmission of diarrhoeal disease. Good hand hygiene plays a significant role in preventing and minimising diseases. You can get germs on your hands when you touch objects. Once germs are on your hands, they can get inside your body through a wound or when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth. You can also spread germs on your hands to objects or people that you touch.

Five facts showing the importance of handwashing:

- It is estimated that washing hands with soap and water could reduce diarrhoeal disease-associated deaths by up to 50%.
- Researchers in London estimate that if everyone routinely washed their hands, a million deaths a year could be prevented.
- A large percentage of foodborne disease outbreaks are spread by contaminated hands. Handwashing can reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and other

infections

- Handwashing can reduce the risk of respiratory infections by 16%.
- In a study involving 16 primary schools and 6 000 students, the use of an alcohol hand sanitiser in the classroom provided an overall reduction in absenteeism due to infection by 20%.

Using recycled material, children can make their own hand washing devices, should they not have handwashing basins or running taps at home or school. Basic steps have been developed to teach children to construct their own handwashing device popularly known as the 'Tippy Tap' to ensure that hands are kept clean at all times.



Demonstration of a Tippy Tap use, a home-made handwashing device - Onverwacht at Primary School, City of Tshwane



**WASH HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER AND PREVENT TRANSMISSION OF DISEASES**



Human hands are one of the chief vehicles of transmission of diarrhoeal disease. Good hand hygiene plays a significant role in preventing and minimising diseases. The Water Research Commission(WRC) in collaboration with the Department of Health promotes good handwashing behaviour in schools and households to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Below are the six steps leading up to clean hands before we touch our food. It is important to note that handwashing needs access to clean water.

### STEPS TO THOROUGH HANDWASHING

 <p><b>1</b> Wet hands and apply soap well then rub hands together. Kolobetsa matsogo ka metsi o a tshase sesepa gothe go a potologa.</p>	 <p><b>2</b> Rub the back of both hands. Tihapa le lemorago la matsogo othe.</p>	 <p><b>3</b> Interlace fingers and rub hands together. A tihape ka mokgwa wa go a pitikolosa le a go a amanya o a sidila.</p>
 <p><b>4</b> Interlock fingers and rub the back of fingers on both hands. Dirisa mokgwa wa go monaganya menwana ya matsogo othe le go a sidila le ko morago.</p>	 <p><b>5</b> Rub thumbs in a rotating manner followed by the area between index fingers and thumb for both hands. Menwana e meitona e pitikologe mo bogareng jwa e mengwe go netefatsa tihapo e e tseneletseng.</p>	 <p><b>6</b> Clean underneath the nails, rinse soap and wipe with paper towel or clean towel. Phephafatsa bokotlase jwa dinala, tshela metsi go ntsha sesepa mo motsogong, o bo o iphimola ka toulu kgotsa mpampiri e e maleba, tsotlhe di e phepa.</p>

Washing hands with soap constantly, especially after using the toilet and before you eat, will protect you from diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera.



To learn more about water and health visit the Electronic Water Knowledge Hub [www.wrc.org.za](http://www.wrc.org.za)

Visit the Water Research Commission's web page at [www.wrc.org.za](http://www.wrc.org.za) and get more tips and research on handwashing