

Clean Hands are Best Defense of Flu, Illness

With the cold and flu season in full swing, one of the most vulnerable populations are young children attending schools and daycare.

To keep kids healthy, handwashing continues to be one of the most simple, yet effective ways to fight disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person-to-person in respiratory droplets of coughs or sneezes called “droplet spread.” This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and come in contact with the mouth or nose of people nearby, or when germs land on shared items such as toys, desks and doorknobs.

If a person fails to wash their hands after touching these surfaces, they can become vulnerable if they touch their eyes, mouth or nose.

To help protect themselves, kids and their parents can now benefit by getting help from the Scrub Club, an animated Web site(www.scrubclub.org) developed by the not for profit NSF International. The new web site teaches kids and their parents the importance of washing hands in the fight against infections and food borne diseases through interactive games, activities, a handwashing song and even an animated webisode.

The Scrub Club was created to raise awareness about the benefits of handwashing. By offering children, parents and teachers a fun and educational Web site, our goal is to reduce the number of school sick days and ultimately improve the overall hygiene of children and adults.

Six Steps to Proper Handwashing

The Scrub Club Web site features super heroes (“soaper-hero” kids-“Hot Shot”, “Chill”, “Squeaks”, “Taki”, “Scruff”, “Tank”, and “P.T.”) that transform to represent each of the six steps to proper handwashing.

Step 1- Wash with warm water-“Hot Shot” and “Chill” turn into hot and cold faucets and then combine to make the warm water essential for proper handwashing.

Step 2- Apply soap-bar or pump are both fine. “Squeaks” can transform into various forms of soap, from bars of all sized to pumps of all kinds.

Step 3- Wash for a full 20 seconds, rubbing hand together to lather soap. “Taki” becomes a clock that counts down the required 20 seconds for thorough handwashing.

Step 4- Clean around your fingernails, using a nail brush if you have one. “Scruff” reminds kids that hands aren’t clean until the nails are clean.

Step 5- Rinse away soap with warm water. “Tank” turns into a sink and serves as a reminder to rinse away germs.

Step 6- Dry with paper towels or warm air dryer. “P.T.” transforms herself into paper towels.

At www.scrubclub.org, kids see the six steps in proper handwashing in action through an interactive webisode. “The Good, the B.A.C. and the Ugly.” finds the Scrub battling the loathsome, but lovable character BAC (From the Partnership for Food Safety Education’s Fight BAC! Food safety public education campaign) and one of his partners in “grime.” “Sal Monella,” in a Wild-West themed adventure.

For more info on the scrubclub and a handwashing program for your school contact your Regional Extension Agent for your County Extension Office, Angela Treadaway at 205-410-3696.