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The effect of a comprehensive handwashing program on absenteeism in elementary schools☆

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Abstract

Handwashing is one of the most important factors in controlling the spread of micro-organisms and in preventing the development of infections. The objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a comprehensive handwashing program on absenteeism in elementary grades. Two hundred ninety students from 5 independent schools were enrolled in the study. Each test classroom had a control classroom, and only the test classroom received the intervention (education program and hand sanitizer). Absenteeism data were collected for 3 months. The number of absences was 50.6% lower in the test group ($P < .001$). The data strongly suggest that a hand hygiene program that combines education and use of a hand sanitizer in the classroom can lower absenteeism and be cost-effective. (Am J Infect Control 2002;30:217-20.)