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Wash your hands

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Fight E.coli and salmonella spread by washing hand 20 seconds or more with soap and warm water

With all the recent news about salmonella outbreaks due to the peanut recall and now the pistachio recall the **Center For Disease Control** has gone so far as to state; "it is well-documented that the most important measure for preventing the spread of pathogens(germs) is effective hand-washing." And the Mayo Clinic advises when teaching young children to wash their hands as long as it takes them to sing "Row Row Row Your Boat" or the "ABC Song" the mean being about twenty seconds in length.

" Infectious diseases that are commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact include the common cold, flu and several gastrointestinal disorders, such as infectious diarrhea. While most people will get over a cold, the flu can be much more serious. Some people with the flu, particularly older adults and people with chronic medical problems, can develop pneumonia. The combination of the flu and pneumonia, in fact, is the eighth-leading cause of death among Americans." ~The Mayo Clinic

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers which don't require water are an excellent alternative to hand washing, particularly when soap and water aren't available and seem to be a big hit in the parent set, as you may notice when a mom (or dad) cracks open a diaper bag in the park or playground. They're actually more effective than soap and water in killing bacteria and viruses that cause disease but have been found to be less effective in removing organic material they simply disinfect them.

Hand washing is especially important for toddlers and children who attend child care. Children younger than 3 years in child care are at greater risk of respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases, which can easily spread to family members and others in the community, especially the elderly.

" Inadequate hand hygiene also contributes to food-related illnesses, such as salmonella and E. coli infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 76 million Americans get a food-borne illness each year. Of these, about 5,000 die as a result of their illness. Others experience the annoying signs and symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea." ~ U.S. Center for Disease Control

Back in the day, ancient Greece that is - hand washing was associated with affluence and nobility as well as prayer and sacred spaces. Offering a house guest a basin of water and towel was a gesture of honor and civility. Not to say our relationship with clean slappers has been a tidy one - for centuries there was no common belief that clean hands were important or proper. In fact, the common belief was disease came from decaying matter and foul smells.

It is one of the easiest but most effective ways to prevent transmission of the common cold and infections ranging from *Clostridium difficile* to MRSA, SARS and bird flu — you may be a bit motivated the next time you're in the kitchen to sing you ABC's a bit slower while you wash your hands with your kids.

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