

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for October 10, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about National Handwashing Day, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Do you wash your hands as often now as you did two years ago? It seemed like everywhere we turned there was a sign reminding us to wash our hands. Many of those signs remain, but I wonder if we still notice them. And more importantly whether we take them to heart and do what they say.

Since I teach food safety classes, I think about handwashing more than the average person. Anyone who works in food service or healthcare would say the same. It is drilled into our brains that washing hands prevents the spread of harmful germs. We follow this advice because we know it works.

Global Handwashing Day is October 15. Why dedicate a day to handwashing? Because it makes a difference. Here are some statistics from The Global Handwashing Partnership made up of businesses and agencies from around the world who want to strengthen handwashing implementation. Handwashing with soap can reduce diarrheal diseases globally by 30%. Handwashing with soap can reduce acute respiratory infections globally by up to 20%.

We don't think about the privilege it is to have running water and soap access essentially any time we want. In 2020 only 71% of people around the globe had access to a basic handwashing facility. This leaves 2.3 billion people who lack basic services, including 670 million people with no handwashing facilities at all.

Like so many things, part of the challenge is access and part of the problem is behavior change. Nudges are the cues in our environment that influence us to behave in a certain way. I've talked before in this column about nudges in the context of behavioral economics. This is making the wise choice the easy choice, like setting up an automatic deposit of a portion of your paycheck into a savings account.

Some countries are experimenting with nudges to improve handwashing. In a 2015 study, researchers in Bangladesh tested the idea of using nudges in school settings to improve rates of

handwashing with soap after using the toilet. They painted brightly colored paths with footprints from toilets to handwashing stations built in visible and easy-to-reach locations. Handwashing increased from 4% to 74% six weeks after the nudges were introduced.

Similarly, schools in Nepal first taught the students how to properly wash their hands. Then they installed mirrors on the walls above some sinks. Handwashing rates increased from 9% to over 65% with these changes. Students showed a significant preference for using sinks with mirrors, even when those sinks were located farther from a latrine.

My favorite local nudge is at the Slurping Turtle restaurant at Easton. The sinks are visible to the public as you leave the toilet area. When everyone can watch whether or not you wash your hands, it has to make a difference in behavior.

It sounds simple but washing our hands does make a difference. It affects health, nutrition, and has economic impact. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that in order for all people in the world to have safe water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030 will require a quadrupling of current rates of progress in safely managed drinking water, sanitation, and basic hygiene services. A 2012 WHO study calculated that every \$1.00 invested in sanitation, resulted in a return of \$5.50 in lower health costs, more productivity, and fewer premature deaths. If you have a heart for global missions and development, consider supporting efforts that focus on providing needed resources and education to improve hygiene access and sustainability.

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. The Take Charge of Your Diabetes During the Holidays program will be Thursday, November 3 from 6:00-7:30 PM at Frontier Power Community Room. This evening will provide you with tips for managing your diabetes during the holidays. Cooking demonstrations and samples will be provided. Register online for this free program at coshocton.osu.edu or call OSU Extension at 740-622-2265.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!