

Hand washing, Kindergarten style

I can could claim I'm a hand washing expert. Over the past years, I have inspected more than 5,000 hands during youth hand washing programs. These school enrichment programs focus on healthy eating, trying new foods and getting rid of germs.

When I go into the classroom of young children, I'm prepared with puppets, a story, and cool tools. One of my cool tools is a germ disclosing lotion that appears under a blacklight. After hand washing, the goal is to not see the lotion.

Here are highlights from these experiences:

Weeper - "Ahh - she put germs on my hands" Me - "No, it is lotion that is pretend germs. It is just lotion! You can wash it off."

Overconfident - "I washed my hands. Yesterday."

Piddler - "I will wash and count to 100."

Soaper - "I use lots of soap" as the suds are rubbed up to the elbows.

Single side - "My hands are clean." Under the black light, the lotion was rubbed on one side of the hands. The back side of the hands didn't get lotion and no rubbing during hand washing. Sometimes that back side isn't even wet.

Nailed it - "I did a good job." Frequently, the blacklight reveals lotion around fingernails and wrists. For those nail biters, germs love these hiding spaces and instant access to the mouth.

Birthday singer - This is the kid that hums or sings "happy birthday" as they wash their hands, maybe for 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 seconds. Kindergarteners are just learning to count, so they are happy singing "happy birthday" twice. It just takes some of them longer.

Shark fan - "Are we going to talk about sharks?" Me - "No, we're practicing hand washing." "Sharks like water. I really like sharks. Sharks don't have hands."

Questioner - "Can you look at my hands again? Where did you get the flashlight? What is in this lotion?"

As you can imagine, a 30 minute presentation with kindergarteners is very interesting. Whatever your age, remember the main points: use soap, water and rub for at least 20 seconds - tops, bottoms, in between fingers, wrists and around nails. Wash your hands frequently for your health... unless you are a shark.

K-State Research and Extension Events - call 620.221.5450 to register.

March 19 - Grant Writing Workshop - Cowley College, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. (registration fee \$30) - registration requested by March 10

March 24, 31, April 7 & 14 - Dining with Diabetes Class series, Winfield Public Library, 5:30-7:30 p.m. (registration fee \$25)

April 4 - Mental Health First Aid, Cowley County Courthouse, Winfield, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. (registration fee \$35)

Scholarships available for all programs.

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