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HANDWASHING IS THE NEW VACCINE

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Sanford, Fla. — National Handwashing Awareness Week (December 6-12) is an important time to highlight the significance of proper hand hygiene. “Handwashing is the New Vaccine” is the theme for this year’s awareness week, sponsored by [Henry the Hand](#). The theme highlights the important role handwashing plays to protect against all respiratory and many gastro-intestinal infections. In observance of National Handwashing Awareness Week, the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) reminds residents to protect themselves and their families from illness by washing hands regularly.

Handwashing is like a “do-it-yourself” vaccine—it involves five simple and effective steps (Wet, Lather, Scrub, Rinse, Dry) you can take to reduce the spread of diarrheal and respiratory illness so you can stay healthy. Regular handwashing, particularly before and after certain activities, is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. It’s quick, it’s simple, and it can keep us all from getting sick. Handwashing is a win for everyone, except the germs.

“Handwashing and sanitation has saved more lives than medical research and is one of the top ten achievements in public health history,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. “Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water.”

When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food;
- Before eating food;
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick;
- Before and after treating a cut or wound;
- After using the toilet;
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet;
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste;
- After handling pet food or pet treats; and
- After touching garbage.

For more information about handwashing, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov. Additional information can be found at DOH-Seminole’s website, www.seminolecohealth.com.

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