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For Immediate Release

### **Give the gift of handwashing this holiday season**

Tis the Season for getting together with family, friends and germs. All of us will be busy this next month or so preparing to see family and friends, go to our favorite places and hopefully spend some fun time with our children as they are home for their winter break from school. But as we begin to get out and around town, the germs that cause colds and flu want to get in on the action, too. They're lurking in the crowd, just looking for opportunities to catch you off guard. How do we keep the germs from joining in on our winter fun with family and friends? By washing hands throughout the day, each day, children and adults alike.

Experts agree that washing your hands: before and after getting your food ready, before and after eating, after coughing and sneezing, and for sure after using the bathroom can really help to keep the germs away and keep your family healthy!

Teach your children how to wash their hands and keep the germs away:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Sing the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice, which will take you about 20 seconds.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If you cannot wash your hands with soap and water, use antibacterial hand gel until you can wash with soap and water. Be sure to use the hand wipes at the grocery store and don't touch your nose or mouth without getting your hands cleaned first! Make sure your children are doing the same, don't forget you are the role model to show them how to do it!

For fun check out [Henry the Hand](#) on You Tube to help teach your children about good handwashing!

The Winnebago County Health Department also wants to remind you about a recent spike in Shigellosis cases that have been seen mostly in school-aged children. Shigellosis is an infection caused by someone else's bacteria getting inside of you. Shigellosis:

- Is diarrhea (sometimes bloody), fever, abdominal pain and Tenesmus (a painful sensation of needing to pass stools even when bowels are empty).
- Usually begins 1 to 2 days after becoming infected with the bacteria.
- Will last about 5 to 7 days.

If you or someone in your family has experienced the symptoms above, and are still feeling bad, contact your doctor to get help, and please stay home if you are sick.

Again the season is about fun and family and friends. To spend time with your family and keep this germ from getting into your house, your children and you: Wash your hands during the day! Just doing this one activity of washing your hands will help to keep you and your children and other family and friends healthy and happy for the New Year. “This holiday season, give the gift of healthy clean hands. We can spread many diseases throughout the season by not washing hands thoroughly with soap and clean, running water,” said Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator, Dr. Sandra Martell. “It is ever important to spread this holiday health tip as the Winnebago County Health Department is still seeing a rise in confirmed cases Shigellosis in our community bringing the new total to 75, since October 2015. The majority of these cases are isolated and have impacted in children in daycare and elementary schools”, added Martell.

For more information on hand hygiene, visit our website at: [www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org). Like us: [facebook.com/Winnebago County Health Department](https://facebook.com/WinnebagoCountyHealthDepartment). Follow us: [twitter.com/Winncohealth](https://twitter.com/Winncohealth). Or Contact us at Winnebago County Health Department 401 Division Street, PO Box 4009, Rockford, Illinois 61110, or by phone at 815-720-4000.

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