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For Immediate Release

Give The Gift of Health Not Illness This Holiday Season

Tis the season for getting together with family, friends, and food preparation.

Food-borne illnesses are always a concern during the holidays as we gather with family and friends, but more this year, as the Shigella infection is circulating throughout our community and Illinois. If you are experiencing any illness this holiday season, avoid any food preparation including cooking, baking, serving, and setting the table. You can still help by decorating, wrapping gifts, or any other preparations not involving food. Please remember to wash hands frequently throughout the day. "Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others especially during the holiday season. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands thoroughly with soap and clean, running water," said Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator, Dr. Sandra Martell.

Spread wellness to family this holiday season by teaching your family members 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!

This holiday season, give the gift of health not illness. It is ever so 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 108, since October 2015.

For more information on hand hygiene, visit our website at: www.wchd.org. Like us: [facebook.com/Winnebago County Health Department](https://www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCountyHealthDepartment). Follow us: 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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