

How to promote handwashing against the COVID-19 propagation within international delegations

INTERNAL DOCUMENT / Coronavirus - Procedure n° ... – DROI-DeXT

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Due to the evolving nature of the situation related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the necessity to adjust the responses, including technical, these documents are likely to be modified or completed.

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this **technical sheet** is to support delegations in responding to the health crisis context linked to the new coronavirus, COVID-19, by **promoting handwashing**. Viruses enter the body mainly through the eyes, nose or throat, and most often this contact is made by the hands¹. Contacts by the hands also favor the transmission of the coronavirus from one person to another. Hand washing is one of the **essential barrier gestures, and represents a simple, economical and above all very effective action to slow the spread of COVID-19**.

This technical sheet aims to present simple principles and actions to promote hand washing. These actions can be implemented at all levels but above all target the level of communities and households.

The content of this sheet is mainly taken from information given by the webinar that was organized by **Wash'Em**² on March 25, 2020, as well as from its guide on COVID-19³, which offers simple and inexpensive activities to set up. Wash'Em is a process designed by ACF (Action Against Hunger), the Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to have **rapidly developed, evidence-based and context-specific behavior change programs on handwashing in emergency**. Wash'Em is used by 45 organizations, including during epidemics (such as Ebola or cholera).

¹ UNICEF, Everything you need to know about washing your hands to protect against coronavirus (COVID-19) <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19>

² Wash'Em website: <https://washem.info/>

³ Wash'EM, Handwashing with soap, our best defense against coronavirus https://washem-guides.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/washem_quicktip_coronavirus.pdf

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the WHO recommends frequent handwashing with a hydroalcoholic solution, or with water and soap, for at least 20 seconds according to a predefined sequence (see Annex 1).

Hand washing should be done at a minimum at the following **critical times**⁴:

- After blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing;
- After going to a public place, in particular in public transport, markets and places of worship;
- After touching surfaces outside your home, including money;
- Before, during and after care if you are caring for a sick person;
- Before and after eating.

If hand washing is essential, its rate at these critical moments remains on average below 20% worldwide⁵.

First, five general principles need to be highlighted to guide handwashing promotion activities as part of the response to COVID-19.

B. GENERAL PRINCIPALS TO GUIDE HANDWASHING PROMOTION ACTIVITIES AGAINST COVID-19

1. Promote the barrier gestures, including handwashing with soap, against COVID-19

Promoting handwashing is essential, but it should not be the only component of a response to the coronavirus. Other hygiene measures are also essential.

There are other measures:

- Coughing in your elbow, or avoid touching your face;
- Respecting social distancing helps limit the spread;
- Ensure that the symptoms are understood by the populations, in particular by ensuring that there is a telephone line for information and assistance on COVID-19 (with an operator such as Orange Africa for example);
- Provide social support for all, but especially for the vulnerable and isolated elderly, by offering them a regular exchange, or even help with their shopping;
- Inform and deny false ideas or information that circulates. WHO infographics can be used to set the record straight⁶.

2. Obtain information from reliable sources

It is necessary to be informed but by paying attention to its sources. Among the reliable sources, we can identify the sites of :

- WHO : <https://www.who.int/fr/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- UNICEF : <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19>
- The Global Handwashing partnership: <https://globalhandwashing.org/topic/coronavirus/>
- The national Ministries of Health
- The CDC (Centre for the control and prevention of diseases) : <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>
- Major international media : RFI, BBC, CNN...

⁴ UNICEF, Everything you need to know about washing your hands to protect against coronavirus (COVID-19) <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19>

⁵ Wash'EM, Handwashing with soap, our best defense against coronavirus https://washem-guides.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/washem_quicktip_coronavirus.pdf

⁶ WHO, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Myth busters <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

- Scientific media like the Lancet:
<https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR0KByUZAoz5xJJT2D7p8wkGdUXDLWTOzyDNkKx9u9I9YeZkxYMzGLMHfUc>

A selection of reliable information, sometimes simplified, is available on the DEXT-U website of the DROI: <https://www.expertiseinternationale.net/alerte> + on the intranet website of the FRC.

3. Coordinate responses

- Ensure that there is a coordinated response to deal with COVID-19, whether among private or public players.
- Mobilize as many people as possible: community leaders, business leaders, social or religious organizations... These actors can provide different types of assistance, including financial support or knowledge sharing (information and communication) or simply influence with the communities.
- Points of attention :
 - o Remember to encourage companies and groups to take care of their employees, and members of their community (especially by handwashing).
 - o Think, beforehand, of identifying the key skills that could be useful for this effort.
 - o Remember to anticipate the establishment of means of communication to facilitate the work between different partners and allow to stay in contact.

4. Protect workers and communities

- Take care not to jeopardize or not to take risks for the staff or the community.
- Avoid community gatherings for any type of activity, especially for training or awareness raising.
- Emphasize the use of mass media, social media and online communications.
- Assess the risks locally and follow the advice of the government before any home visit if necessary.
- Ensure that team members and field staff are able to maintain good hand hygiene, with infrastructures available.

5. Ensure clear messages on handwashing

- Make sure to carry a clear message on handwashing so that people wash their hands carefully and especially frequently.
- If the message is too detailed (e.g. the different stages of the WHO), it may not be very clear and therefore may not be put into practice. Simplify it as much as possible.

C. SIX SIMPLE AND PRATICAL ACTIONS TO PROMOTE HANDWASHING

These **actions** has been conceived to be implementated in a **quick, easy and cost effective** way.

1. Ensure that there are handwashing infrastructures and soap

- Consider installing handwashing stations and soap, as there will be a higher demand by the population during an epidemic.
- Recommend and put in place, if possible, any type of system that avoids manipulating / touching the water point as much as possible with the hands (pedal system for running the water, soap hanging and fixed securely to a string or placed in a net...)
- Prefer liquid soaps or soapy water (solution already prepared), perceived as more hygienic.
- Remember to identify a person responsible for maintaining the good working order of the handwashing point and for the frequent replenishment of water, soap ...
- Give priority to urban areas, especially in places where people meet such as at stations and markets, or at the entrance / exit of buildings, and at the places where we prepare or eat food. These hand washing stations must be clearly visible, and installed as a priority next to toilets, kitchens and eating places.
- Do not hesitate to recall all the barrier measures at the water points.



Photos : Handwashing station and soaps.
Source : Wash'Em

2. Stimulate better behaviors



- You have to stimulate, encourage people, make **handwashing automatic**, hard to avoid, and make sure there is **social pressure** for handwashing and that it is pleasant to wash hands.

Here are some examples of devices to promote the automation of hand washing:

- Put eyes above the handwashing areas (it simulates peer pressure),
- Put posters in the toilets,
- Create arrangements around the sink to make hand washing more **pleasant** and therefore longer.
- Set up color lines automatically guiding people from certain places (toilets ...) to the hand washing point.

Photos : Nudges in toilets and above sinks.
Source : Wash'Em

3. Change the message regularly, make it fun and surprising

- Many messages about COVID and handwashing are reminded regularly. In the long run, they become **familiar and repetitive**.
- You must then **change the message very regularly** (weekly), reformulate it, make it more original
- Put messages with images so that illiterate people can access them, think of bright colors that catch the eye, funny, light messages that aim to **arouse curiosity**.



Comment bien se laver les mains?

Toute la procédure doit durer
au moins 20 secondes

Source: OMS

The future is in your hands • Don't get caught germly handed. • **Drown a bug, save a life.** • So you want to change the world – start by washing your hands! • **Stop!** Handwashing is practiced here. • Washed hands are caring hands. • What are the top ten carriers of infection? Answer: each one of your fingers. • Did you know germs can live on your hands for 3 days? • **Lifesaving soap available here** • Clean up your act • See sink? Use soap • **Don't be a dirty soap dodger** • Is the person next to you washing with soap? • **Note: This soap is not just for decoration** • Take a moment to refresh – wash hands with soap • **Others are watching – better wash your hands** • Happiness is: being around people who clean their hands • **What have you just touched?** • Did you know there are 3200 germs on your hands right now! • **Unwashed hands. Eewww!** • Clean hands deserve two thumbs up • **Clean hands make the world go round.** • Stop - in the name of soap - before you break my heart!

Photo: examples of sentences on handwashing.
Source Wash'Em

4. Make sure handwashing becomes the norm

- Thinking about innovative methods of handwashing promotion messages: a “clean hands” challenge with **celebrities** (singers, footballers, authorities...) who share videos on social networks where they wash their hands, helps **normalize these gestures**
- Point of attention when working with celebrities :
 - o Think about celebrities and people of influence at the local level, in your context of intervention!
 - o Consider that hand washing is done appropriately and with equipment adapted to the local context (there is not necessarily a tap with running water everywhere).



Photos : scientific personalities and celebrities washing their hands
Source Wash'Em

5. Promote soap !

- Remind people how powerful and effective soap is, that soap is great and absolutely necessary for quality hand washing.
- Share experiments by sharing videos on social networks for example, or by making tutorials to make people have easy and fun experiments (adults and children).

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Photos : examples of experiments on soap efficiency, Source Wash'Em



Examples of experiments from left to right from 1 to 5, in the order of the photos:

- 1/ Put ground pepper, which represents microbes, on water. If you put soap on your finger and then put it in water, the pepper is repelled⁷
- 2/ Coat your hands with oil / petroleum jelly + glitter / turmeric. We first try to wash our hands with only water (the glitter / turmeric does not leave) then with water and soap (much more effective!)⁸
- 3/ Offer a snack to someone. Before eating it, the person is invited to wash hands and the water obtained from hand washing is collected. Observe the dirty water and ask the person if he would like to eat with their unwashed hands
- 4/ & 5/ Touch different surfaces then wipe hands thoroughly on bread (bag 2: dirty hands). Then wash hands with soap, take a second slice of bread and wipe hands over it (bag 1: clean hands). Wait 3 days and observe the result and the difference⁹

6. Contradict false ideas with real experiences

The appearance of a new disease logically creates many fears.

- Correct misconceptions and deconstruct false information through real experiences of COVID-19 contamination.
- Use the examples given by celebrities (Idris Elba infected for instance), but also more widely, tell stories of people from the community.
- By sharing their **experiences** and their **testimonies** (with their agreement), the disease will be better understood.
- If these witnesses insist on the importance of washing hands with soap, this will probably be more likely to convince others and **change their behavior**.



Photos: examples of celebrities sharing their contamination experience
Source Wash'Em

REMARKS :

- Use of ash for handwashing. Soap is more effective against COVID-19 because it destroys the crown of the virus and kills it. We do not yet know about the ash: we therefore recommend using soap. However if there really is no soap it is better to use ash than just water.
- What about the use of chlorinated water for handwashing? It is not necessary to use chlorinated water: soap has the same effect but is less dangerous than chlorine (which causes irritation). However, chlorinated water can be used in contexts where it is already in place and accepted (e.g. Ebola context).

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ho0o7H6dXSU>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TJJNsUmDQ0>

⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlOoDe7_RJg

ONGOING HEALTH PROGRAMS

The current Health programs have the role of providing operational support to crisis management with the health regions / districts in which we operate (assistance in creating case monitoring databases, coordination of actors, etc.) and to participate in COVID-19 meetings in collaboration with HNS.

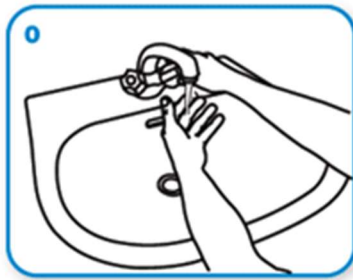
The Health Section technical advisers remain available to support missions in monitoring and / or reorganizing current projects according to the initial distribution (usual advisers).

For new Covid-19 medical projects and questions, please contact:

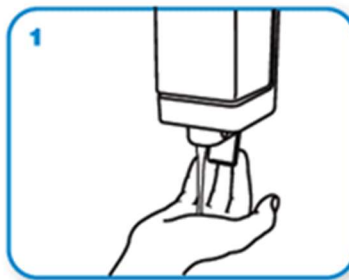
- Dr Djeri MOLAMBA : DjeriAmani.Molamba@croix-rouge.fr / + 33 6 33 07 88 01
- Dr Bernard SIMON : Bernard.Simon@croix-rouge.fr / + 33 6 74 39 87 33

ANNEX : Handwashing steps

https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/



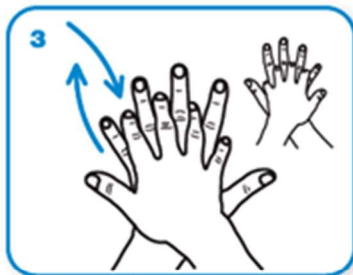
Wet hands with water



apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



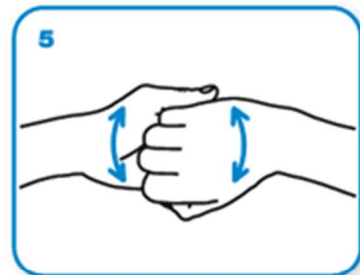
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum
with interlaced fingers
and vice versa



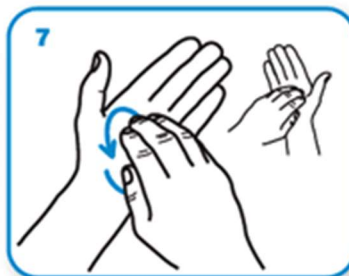
palm to palm with fingers
interlaced



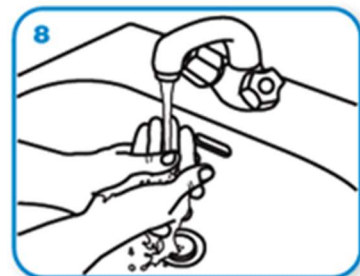
backs of fingers to opposing
palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb
clasped in right palm
and vice versa



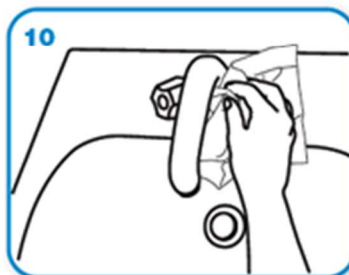
rotational rubbing, backwards
and forwards with clasped
fingers of right hand in left
palm and vice versa.



Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single
use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



...and your hands are safe.