

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Handwashing Importance

Date: Everyday

Location: Every Location

Are You Doing Your Part to Fight the Good Fight by Washing Your Hands?

Napoleon watched as Kip scampered out of the Porta-Potty, skipped right past the handwashing station, and jumped directly into the chow line.

Next, Napoleon scowled as Kip sneezed into his hand and wiped the copious amount of snot onto his poison-oak saturated Nomex.

Were Napoleon's eyes deceiving him? Or was Kip really going to place the entire fire camp at risk of spreading all of this witnessed nastiness to his crew—and others—by not taking the simple step of washing his hands?

Should Napoleon Speak Up and Say Something?

Kip grabbed his plate of quesadillas from the camp kitchen and walked over to the salad bar. He reached for the salad tongs and served himself up. He grabbed different tongs as he piled on the various beautiful veggies. Then Kip grabbed the Italian dressing bottle and smothered his salad in the oily tastiness.

In doing so, Kip touched at least five different items that others would soon also come into direct contact with. As this entire fiasco unfolded, Napoleon watched in horror. He internally debated whether or not he should speak up and say something—or just stand by in muted silence.

But if Napoleon simply stands by, will he allow disease to spread within the camp, as well as the direct exposure of poison oak to affect countless people?



Kip Now has a New Mission

Napoleon looked down and realized that he had his dancing shoes on. He approached Kip and told him how it is. *"Nunchuck skills. Bowhunting skills. Computer-hacking skills. Women only want boyfriends who have great skills! Including washing their hands!"*

Kip looked up in astonishment. *"Napoleon, don't be jealous 'cause I've been doing structure protection all day. Besides, we both know that I'm training to become a cage fighter."*

Napoleon shrugged in disbelief. *"Geez Kip, you have to learn to wash your hands. Keeping our hands clean is one of the most important steps we can all take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others."*

Kip quickly recognized that Napoleon was right, that handwashing is super important. He would never realize his dreams of being a cage fighter if he was sick and covered in poison oak. Kip suddenly knew that he had a new mission: Training to be a hand washer.

Are you doing your part to fight the good fight by washing your hands?

How and Why We Wash Our Hands

Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing our hands with soap and clean, running water. This includes poison oak exposure being spread to our body—as well as to others.

The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cleaning our hands in a specific way to avoid getting sick, spreading germs to others, and spreading toxins to others.

This guidance for effective handwashing and use of hand sanitizer was developed based on data from a number of studies:



- ❖ **Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), and generously apply soap.**

Using soap to wash hands is more effective than using water alone because the surfactants in soap lift soil and microbes from your skin. In addition, people tend to scrub hands more thoroughly when using soap, which further removes germs.

- ❖ **Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap.**

Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your finger nails. Lathering and scrubbing hands creates friction, which helps lift dirt, grease, and microbes which are present on all surfaces of our hands and are often in high concentration under the nails. Therefore, the entire hand should be scrubbed.

- ❖ **Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.**

A good timing mechanism is to hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice. Determining the optimal length of time for handwashing is difficult because handwashing depends on many factors, including the type and amount of soil on the hands, as well as the person’s setting who is washing their hands.

- ❖ **Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.**



Soap and friction help lift dirt, grease, and microbes from skin so they can then be rinsed off of your hands.

Rinsing the soap away also minimizes skin irritation.

Because hands could become re-contaminated if rinsed in a basin of standing water that has been contaminated through previous use, clean running water should always be used.

❖ **Dry your hands using a clean towel or air-dry them.**

Germs can be transferred more easily to and from wet hands. Therefore, hands should be dried after washing. Studies suggest that using a clean towel or air-drying hands are best.

Source for this Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html>



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