



Extension Snapshot

How Clean are Your Hands?

How clean are your hands? That is the question being posed to hundreds of Peoria County youth as they meet for in-school and after-school youth groups with their SNAP-Ed leaders. Since this month marks the start of the fall (and cold/flu) season, SNAP-Ed Program Assistants are launching their annual lesson on the importance of handwashing in an effort to reduce children's exposure to colds and the flu.

Each handwashing lesson begins with three objectives to guide it: 1 – That children will understand that germs are everywhere; 2 – That children will learn the most important times to wash their hands; and 3 – That children will demonstrate proper handwashing techniques. Program Assistants discuss with the children the concept of germs and the times when handwashing is needed, but the real excitement happens when those lessons are applied. Staff members use an interactive activity to illustrate the topic.

After discussing how simple it can be to pass on germs, children get to see how clean their hands really are. Program Assistants put a few drops of a special solution on each child's hands and tell them to rub it all over their hands and fingernails. Then the students wash their hands thoroughly and dry them, and then they each check the cleanliness of their hands by putting them under an ultraviolet light. If they haven't washed off all of the special solution (representing germs), they will see the remaining solution glow and will know exactly which areas of their handwashing technique need improvement.



A Program Assistant helps block out the overhead light so a student can see the "germs" on her hands under the ultraviolet light.

When the lesson is over, Program Assistants ask the children how many of them will wash their hands properly and more often. With hands-on teaching tools like these, it is not unusual to have 100% of the children pledge to do so.

For more information about the SNAP-Ed program in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell unit, please contact Ashley Schriver, Program Coordinator, SNAP-Ed at aschrive@illinois.edu or 309-685-3140, ext. 16.

