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Unwashed Hands The Biggest Spreader of Disease

Its enough to keep you from using public washrooms and shaking people's hands altogether.

The American Society For Microbiology has reported its finding that while 95 of 100 Americans claim to wash their hands after going to the bathroom, only 60 per cent actually do so.

The hand-washing habits of 8000 bathroom goers were observed in public washrooms in five major U. S. cities and compared to results of a telephone poll of 1000 adults. While 75 per cent of the women observed washed their hands after using the toilet, only 58 per cent of men did so.

Actual numbers might be lower. It's believed the presence of an observer in the washroom surveyed might have "embarrassed" some people into washing their hands. Dr. Julie Gerberding of the U. S. Centers for Disease control told a news conference colds are transmitted from the hands of one person to another. "You touch your mucus membranes, you touch someone else, they touch their mucus membranes and that's how the cold gets spread," she says.

The same process occurs with the bugs responsible for diarrhea and other gastrointestinal ailments. "Hand washing is obviously the key component to interrupting that spread," she says.

The telephone survey portion of the study revealed 30% of men and 14% of women polled do not wash their hands after changing their babies' diapers.

Here are some hand-washing tips to consider after using a public toilet:

- Rub soap over all areas of your hands, both front and back, for at least 15 seconds and use lots of hot water to wash and rinse.
- Have a piece of paper towel ready to shut off the tap. Taps harbor the germs you are trying to avoid.

- Use the towel to open the washroom's entry/exit door when leaving.
- Notify the appropriate people if the soap or towel dispenser is empty.

Safety Tip: **Handwashing is the most effective way of removing dangerous infectious micro-organisms from your hands and it is effective in limiting your exposure to disease. Knowing when and how to wash your hands is very important. You should wash vigorously for 10-15 seconds and do it often. Remember wearing gloves does not substitute for washing your hands. Washing your hands will help you protect your health and the health of others.**

