



SOLANO COUNTY

County Administrator's Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Campaign emphasizes importance of washing your hands

SOLANO COUNTY – Making hand-washing a habit is the single most important thing you can do to prevent yourself from getting sick or making others sick.

The Environmental Health Division of Solano County's Department of Resource Management will reinforce that message with an information campaign in September – National Food Safety Education Month and International Clean Hands Week (September 16 -22). The campaign will target people who work in the more than 2,000 restaurants and other food facilities across the county; however, health officials point out the importance of hand-washing for everyone.

"Hand washing is important for food safety, disease prevention and personal health," said Joyce Benefield, senior environmental health specialist. "Reducing food-borne illness by just 1 percent would keep about 500,000 Americans from getting sick each year."

The Centers for Disease Control estimates one out of six Americans, or 48 million people, get sick each year as a result of inadequate hand washing. Of these people, about 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 people die from food-borne illnesses. There is a direct link to poor hand-washing in many of these deaths.

During September, Environmental Health staff will conduct inspections at hundreds of food facilities to assess compliance with food safety requirements related to hand washing. Businesses will receive certificates of recognition for demonstrating safe hand-washing techniques and practices.

"Solano County has a proactive environmental health program and food facilities concerned about providing good, safe food to their customers. This campaign reinforces the importance of keeping up the good hand-washing habits," Benefield said.

The proper procedure for washing your hands is to use soap and water, scrub for at least 20 seconds, rinse and dry. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce germs. If soap and water is not available, use a hand sanitizer.

Hands do not have to look dirty to require a good washing. Hands should be washed:

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a wound or cut
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling diapers
- After handling garbage
- After touching animals or pet food
- After touching surfaces that are frequently touched by other people, such as door knobs
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet.

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