

Keeping Athletes Healthy

Coaches, can you remember a time when *all* of your athletes were healthy? Return to school, gathering at competitions, and travel are some of the factors that contribute to the spread of colds and influenza. Respiratory infections prevent athletes from performing at their best. The number one solution is to not get sick in the first place.

Over 80% of the germs that cause respiratory infections are spread by the hands. Handwashing is easy! It's the best way to stop the spread of infections.

Handwashing

The purpose of handwashing is to remove germs from the hands so that germs are not transferred to the eyes, nose, and mouth to cause illness. To do a good job, first wet your hands. Next, apply plain soap. Rub your hands together for 20 seconds or the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday. Rinse for 10 seconds. Finally, dry with a clean, disposable towel.

It is important to wash your hands:

- after using the toilet
- before eating or preparing food
- after blowing your nose or helping a child with a runny nose
- after being with someone who is sick
- after handling shared objects (money, for example)
- before inserting/removing contact lenses
- before flossing your teeth

If you aren't near a sink, use an alcohol-based hand rub. However, these products don't kill all germs so they aren't a substitute for handwashing. Wash hands with plain soap and water as soon as you can.

Wellness tips for coaches, athletes and parents:

1. Wash your hands often. Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infections.
2. Do not share water bottles or lip balm. Write your name on water bottles to prevent sharing.
3. Keep your hands and foreign objects away from your face and out of your mouth.
4. Throw away used tissues promptly.
5. Keep immunizations up to date. Consider getting an annual influenza vaccination.
6. Make sure plain soap and disposable towels are available in the washrooms at your club. (Plain soap prevents illness just as well as antibacterial soap and does not have the negative side effect of promoting antibacterial resistance.)

Remember . . .

As athletes and coaches you are role models for fitness and active living. Staying well is an important aspect of fitness. Make handwashing a habit. Teach others by setting a good example



www.dobugsneeddrugs.org
(604) 660-0966



BC Centre for Disease Control
An Agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Do Bugs Need Drugs? is a community education program about handwashing and the wise use of antibiotics. Programs and materials are reviewed by a panel of medical and scientific experts and are in alignment with the practice guidelines of medical and pharmacy professional organizations, BC Ministry of Health, and Health Canada.