



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Beyond Global Handwashing Day

26 October 2020

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Gauteng Region, together with Department of Health, Bophelong Local Clinic and Emfuleni Local Municipality, commemorated Global Handwashing Day in style on Friday, 23 October 2020 in Vanderbijlpark.

Global Handwashing Day is an annual commemoration to raise awareness about the importance of handwashing with soap to reduce the spread of diseases. In South Africa, diarrhoea and respiratory infections are a major public health problem, and are amongst the top causes of death in children.

The theme of Global Handwashing Day 2020 is **"Hand Hygiene for All"**. The theme gives a call to all in society to achieve universal hand hygiene now and for the future as well. It also raises awareness that soap and water should be available globally mainly in public places, schools, and health care facilities.

The theme also provides a call for institutions and individuals to improve hand hygiene efforts during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and also to understand the importance of hand hygiene.

Speaking during the commemoration, DWS' Water Sector Support, Acting Community Development Officer; Ms Zandile Maseko, said observing Global Handwashing Day has never been more important than during a pandemic that could be stemmed, in part, by everyone taking hand hygiene seriously.

"Keeping our hands clean is one of the most important habits we can adopt to prevent contracting Covid-19 and spreading the coronavirus to others. The COVID-19 pandemic provides an important reminder that handwashing with soap and water is one of the simplest, most effective ways to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy," said Ms Maseko.

Handwashing with soap and water can prevent 1 in 3 people from getting sick with diarrhea and 1 in 5 people from getting a respiratory illness. That is why handwashing is so important, especially at key times such as after using the bathroom, when preparing food, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.

"Why some people do not wash their hands? The factors that influence handwashing behaviours are likely to be optimistic bias, thinking disease can't happen to them or underestimating the severity of the risk", she said.

"Increasing motivation to hand wash in the face of stress and busyness is a difficult challenge. Since we do not have the signage and social cues we usually do in public, a few strategies could help grow motivation and go a long way to remind us of our motivations to be more hygienic.

- Build your knowledge of the coronavirus and the risks.
- Tape to your entrance hall and bathroom wall or mirror pieces of paper that say, "Don't forget to wash hands."

- Further internalize the habit and motivation by creating a routine and considering yourself a role model for others.

KHULEKANI NGCOBO