



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Proper Hygiene When Around Animals



In 4-H, you often find yourself working with animals of all kinds! It is important to learn how to keep yourself, others and the animals safe in the process. The information below can tell you WHY to wash your hands, use the activity to learn HOW to wash your hands.

Contact with animals has many positive effects for people. However, appropriate hygiene should be practiced at all times after handling animals. To decrease the possibility of contracting a zoonotic disease (a disease transmitted between animals and humans), it is essential to wash hands with soap and water after petting, feeding, handling, or having any other contact with animals, their living quarters, or their waste. Germs that may be spread from contact with animals include: *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Coxiella burnetii*, *Campylobacter*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, and ringworm.



Parents and teachers should supervise children to ensure they are using appropriate handwashing techniques, especially after playing with pets at home or visiting fairs, pet stores, nature parks, circuses, educational farms, petting zoos, and exhibits.

When visiting animal areas, parents should discourage:

- Eating or drinking
- The use of strollers, toys, pacifiers, baby bottles, or spill-proof cups
- Hand-to-mouth behaviors, such as thumb-sucking and nail-biting
- Sitting or playing on the ground
- Feeding the animals, unless the contact is controlled with barriers
- Any contact with animals if an individual has open wounds
- Contact with any animal waste

Contact with some animals, such as turtles and chicks, has been shown to increase the risk of disease in small children and other special populations, such as the immunocompromised. [cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/around_animals.html]

4-H +Me = Health: Hand Washing

What will we learn? 4-H members will learn steps for correct hand washing and apply that knowledge to a hands-on activity.

Why is this important? Proper hand washing and cleanliness are important to prevent spreading germs and sickness.

Prep time needed: 5-10 minutes shopping/collecting materials

Activity length: 10 minutes, more time if working with a large group

What will we need?

Preparation:

- Ground cinnamon
- Vegetable cooking spray
- Soap
- Paper towels

At the meeting:

- Sink for demonstration

What do I need to do?

Preparation:

- Purchase needed supplies and bring them to the meeting.

At the meeting:

1. Share with your club members when and why it is important to wash hands. Hands should be washed before preparing food, before eating, after using the bathroom, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing, after playing with animals, and after playing outside.
2. Demonstrate how to properly wash your hands. Begin by wetting your hand with clean, warm water. Apply soap and rub your hands together to make a lather. Make sure to get in between your fingers, under your nails, and on the top of your hands. Do this for at least 20 seconds—about the same amount of time needed to sing the Happy Birthday or ABC Song twice. Finish by rinsing your hands with warm water and drying with a clean towel.
3. Have some volunteers (or the entire club if you have time) wash their hands. Begin by spraying their hands with cooking spray and then sprinkling them with cinnamon. Have them wash their hands using the steps outlined above. Once they have finished washing, have them smell their hands to see if they can still smell cinnamon. If they washed their hands correctly, the cinnamon smell should be gone.



Summary: Proper hand washing and cleanliness are key to maintaining good health and preventing the spread of germs and disease.

What 4-H projects does this activity connect with: Health and Nutrition

Resources: [cdc.gov/features/handwashing/](https://www.cdc.gov/features/handwashing/)