HAND WASHING - WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO IT THE PROPER WAY?

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In 2002, the Food Safety Information Council (FSIC) released results of 2 surveys on hand washing. A qualitative survey conducted by Newspoll, tested people’s knowledge of effective handwashing techniques and a qualitative study examined how well this knowledge was put into practice.

Over the past two years, both the FSIC and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) have received many requests for information about the results of these surveys. The FSIC has now developed a paper giving information about the two studies and their results.

The Newspoll survey of 1250 respondents showed that the vast majority of people knew that it was safe, before handling food, to wash their hands using soap and water and drying thoroughly. However, quite a large minority also thought it was safe to prepare food after just rinsing their hands under water or without using soap.

The qualitative survey observed that the actual behavior of 200 men and women in the public toilets at a suburban shopping center. The study showed that only 20% of females and 7% of males observed, used the proper procedure of washing their hands for at least 10 seconds rubbing soap all over their hand, rinsing and drying for ten seconds with a clean towel or 20 seconds with a hand dryer. 8% of females and 29% of males failed to wash their hands at all after going the toilet. Both studies showed that the worst practice and knowledge come from males of all age groups.
These studies showed that although there has been a considerable increase in the recognition of the need to wash hands correctly, there is clearly an ongoing need for consumer education to translate knowledge of what should be done to keep the food safe into actual safe handling practices. Correct handwashing should be a major element of that education. Now that we are experiencing pandemic, the proper handwashing protocol should be observed, the fast-spreading COVID-19 virus and its variants can be spread through improper handling of food so as to avoid contamination.

Reference: www.foodsafety.asu.au