

# PANDEMIC FLU PREVENTION:

The best advice may be  
“rub-a-dub-dub.”



**With all the talk of a flu pandemic,** it is good to know that the simplest of acts can help keep you safe.

You don't need a prescription (or the dreaded referral note from your doctor). It is as easy for a 50-year-old to do as it is for a 10-year-old, and it is free. In fact, it can help fight more than just the flu.

Here is how you do it: Find a sink, pick up some soap, wash your hands. Seems too simple to be true? Turns out, Mom was right: Washing your hands is good for your health. Viruses can survive on your hands for hours and washing your hands regularly is a proven way to decrease your chances of getting sick.

You are probably thinking “Of course, I wash my hands!” Well, not to burst your (soapy) bubble, but many of us are guilty of skipping



out at the sink. According to a survey sponsored by the American Society for Microbiology, 91 percent of adults say they always wash their hands after using a public bathroom, but only 83 percent were observed doing so. Only 32 percent say they wash their hands after coughing or sneezing, which means it may be time to replace “Gesundheit” with “Wash your hands!”

To illustrate just how big a small thing like washing your hands can be, in 2005, health workers in Karachi, Pakistan, educated residents about washing their hands and gave out free soap. The results were impressive. Incidents of impetigo, a contagious skin infection, decreased by 34 percent, diarrhea by 53 percent and pneumonia by 50 percent.

Here are a few tips: use warm water, wash with soap for at least 20 seconds (sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice), and if possible use your towel to turn off the faucet. If you are not near soap and water, an alcohol-based gel will do.

And if not getting sick is not enough to make you wash your hands, just think how proud your Mom would be.

