



The Global Handwashing Day is being celebrated around the globe on October 15. Simply washing hands with soap breaks the transmission route of infectious diseases, which is crucial in saving lives. Washing hands with soap at critical times can reduce diarrhoeal incidence by 47%. Diarrhoea occupies a leading position among diseases as a cause of death and illness, especially in children.

In the Pacific region, around 3000 children under the age of 5 years die from diarrhoea annually. Globally, hand washing could save around 1 million lives, more than any single vaccine or medical intervention.

Hand washing with soap at critical times is a simple and cost-effective measure to improve health and will significantly reduce the two leading causes of childhood mortality worldwide – diarrhoeal disease and acute respiratory infection.

Critical times include events such as after going to the toilet; before preparing and eating food; after you sneeze, cough or blow your nose; after playing with your pets and after changing baby's nappy or diaper.

Lack of soap or knowledge about the health benefits associated with its use is rarely the cause of not washing hands; it is rather simply not a habit. Promoting hand washing with soap therefore often requires changing behaviour.

In the Pacific region, handwashing is promoted actively through the Pacific WASH (water supply, sanitation and hygiene) Coalition, which includes agencies that implements WASH activities in Pacific island countries with SPC-SOPAC as the Coalition secretariat. In Fiji, SOPAC Division is working with partners including the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and Live & Learn Environmental Education Fiji with kind support from Colgate Palmolive to hold the national celebration on October 14 at the MHCC Complex in Suva.

Schools along the Suva/Nausori corridor will be invited to participate in this event. There will be exhibition booths and displays for the general public from different NGOs and government departments to highlight the importance of handwashing.

Clean Hands Saves Lives

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There will be also celebrations in the other centres around Fiji in the Northern and the Western through the Divisional Hospitals under the Ministry of Health.

Simple is often beautiful, which is the case with hand hygiene. Remember clean hands save lives.

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