

Reducing the spread of COVID-19 through handwashing promotion

Ideas and rapid actions that can be done by local level actors in
low and middle income settings.

 Wash'Em

What is Wash'Em ?

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



A process for rapidly designing evidence-based and context-adapted handwashing behaviour change programmes in emergencies.



Handwashing with soap – our best defence against coronavirus

Wash'Em

The global spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has resulted in public officials and mainstream media encouraging people to wash their hands with soap as regularly as possible. The simple act of handwashing with soap remains our best defence against coronavirus, other outbreak pathogens and common global killers such as diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory infections. However, rates of handwashing with soap at critical times (such as after using the toilet or before eating) are less than 20% globally.

In this guide we give you practical tips for how to encourage community-level handwashing behaviour with the aim of controlling and preventing the spread of the coronavirus. This guide is not a technical brief about COVID-19, please refer to reliable sources such as the [CDC](#) or [WHO](#) for this information. If you are working on water, sanitation or hygiene we recommend you read [this technical guide](#) also.

How to change handwashing behaviour:

- Globally most people know the benefits of handwashing. Despite knowing this, people all around the world often forget or deprioritize handwashing with soap. To really change behavior we need to do more than just hygiene education.
- People sometimes don't practice handwashing because it is inconvenient or because they have other priorities. So to change handwashing behaviour we need to create an enabling environment, establish positive social norms and make it a desirable thing to do.
- In an outbreak people normally start to wash their hands more frequently and more thoroughly. This is because they perceive themselves to be more vulnerable to disease than usual. Our job is to support this natural instinct without creating unnecessary fear and do so in a way that establishes handwashing as a habitual practice that persists even after the outbreak.

What is Wash'Em and how does it relate to coronavirus?

Wash'Em provides humanitarian organisations with a way of designing rapid, evidence-based, and context adapted hygiene programmes. The Wash'Em process combines 5 rapid assessment tools to learn about the determinants of handwashing behaviour with a software that helps humanitarians to identify contextualised hygiene promotion activities. To date Wash'Em has been used in 34 humanitarian emergencies by 45 NGOs. In each case Wash'Em has facilitated handwashing programmes to be designed in just a week.

Wash'Em has also been used in the acute phase of cholera outbreaks and for Ebola prevention. Wash'Em is also a useful resource for hygiene promotion in the context of coronavirus because it includes a set of 80 easy-to-implement activities that can be used to promote handwashing in regions of the world where the coronavirus is spreading.

Recommendations:

to be used in the coming month (March 2020) for coronavirus have been chosen because they are quick, easy, and low cost.

by increasing the availability of handwashing facilities, soap and the presence of a handwashing facility can make people 60% more likely to wash their hands. Focus on providing handwashing infrastructure in visible places, such as outside of buildings, in places where lots of people gather (like markets) and in places where handwashing is most needed (outside toilets and latrines). Read our [guide](#) on how to design handwashing infrastructure that works.

the coronavirus. When a new disease emerges it can create a lot of fear about an outbreak like coronavirus but fear can cause people to act in harmful ways. We suggest that you partner with health authorities who have been exposed to the virus and who have recovered. Sharing the individuals (with their permission) will help you build an accurate picture of the disease. Getting these individuals to speak out about the importance of handwashing is likely to be much more believable and have a much more persuasive impact than others. Find out more about how to do this activity [here](#).

Messages surprising. Placing messages (e.g. on posters) in key locations where people wash their hands with soap at critical times. However, if people begin to go unnoticed and may no longer trigger the handwashing message every few days will help to keep the message fresh and relevant. While COVID-19 is a serious disease our goal should be aspirational and fun. Find out more about this activity [here](#).

Power of soap! Soap has been around for since 2800BC so it is easy to see why it is so important. In most countries people wash their hands with water - but handwashing with soap truly cleans hands. Wash'Em is designed to show the power of soap. All you need is soap, water, and a little bit of creativity. These when you visit communities, make sure to assess the risk of handwashing in the areas where you are working. You can also share these activities on social media to try them at home.

Handwashing with soap – our best defence against coronavirus

and celebrate handwashing. Controlling an outbreak like coronavirus requires the community to work together and practice handwashing with soap regularly. Rewarding people when they do the right thing is more likely to encourage them to do it again and can help with long-lasting habit formation. If you are working in a setting where social media is common, then share photos of people washing their hands with soap and praise them for doing the right thing. If you are working in a setting where social media is less common, then create a champions wall where you feature similar photos on a wall in a public place. Find out more about how to do these activities by following the links.

[Social media recognition](#)
[Recognition wall](#)

Short-term approach (for use if COVID-19 continues to spread)

The above are designed to be simple short-term ideas to promote handwashing with soap in places where coronavirus is spreading. If the coronavirus continues, those implementing action programmes will need to change their approach in the following months. This behaviour change is complex and often you need to include a range of activities which go through a range of mediums in order to sustain behaviour. From April 2020 onwards we are developing a contextualised and longer-term response to the COVID-19 outbreak. To learn about Wash'Em visit our [website](#) or access our [software](#). Here you can download the rapid assessment tools and the training package or watch our [video](#). You can also use the software to generate additional handwashing programme materials.

Rapid Assessment tools can be adapted in simple ways for COVID-19 prevention.

Handwashing Demonstrations tool - use as per the guide

Perception - the guide uses diarrhoea as the case study disease. To adapt it change 'diarrhoea' reference to coronavirus.

Use as per the guide. If you do not have time to do all the Rapid Assessment tools the Perceptions tool can be dropped.

Histories - use the worksheet that is designed for outbreak prevention. Adapt the questions so that you ask participants to describe what would happen should they get coronavirus.

Maps - use as per the guide.

Key Facts:

Coronaviruses are transferred through hands. In fact, at any one time we have about 3,200 coronavirus particles on our hands (many of which are not harmful).

Hands are re-contaminated. An hour after handwashing with soap they will typically be re-contaminated. This means it's important to wash your hands as often as possible.

Coronaviruses are much smaller than bacteria and are typically harder to remove from hands. This is why it is important to wash hands thoroughly (for about 20 seconds), creating a nice soapy lather over all your hands and then rinsing the soap off fully. Drying your hands can help to remove any remaining germs.

Hand gel can be used when you do not have easy access to water and soap.



Wash'Em



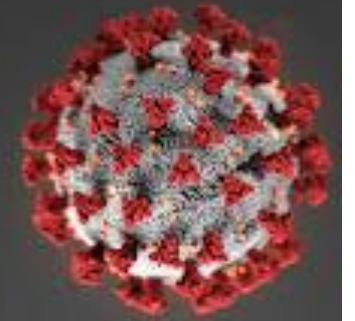
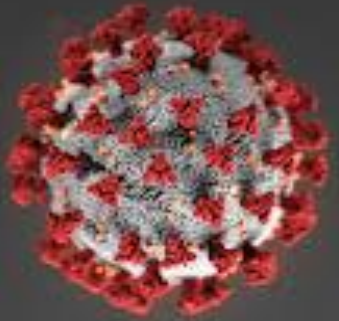
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Website: washem.info

Overview

Part 1: General principles to guide your response

Part 2: simple actions to promote handwashing



1

Handwashing promotion is critical but should not be the only component of coronavirus response



- Other hygiene measures
- Social distancing
- Health seeking processes & COVID-19 help lines
- Social support
- Challenging misconceptions

2

Stay informed
through reliable
sources



- WHO
- National Department of Health
- CDC
- Major international media organisations.

3

Involve others in your response:

- Businesses
- Community leaders
- Social or religious organisations



- 1) Get businesses and groups to prioritise looking their employees / community members.
- 2) Identify key skills that could help in the effort
- 3) Set up communication mechanisms

4

Don't put your
staff or the
community at risk



- Avoid all large community gatherings.
- Focus on mass media social media and infrastructure.
- Assess risk locally before doing household visits.
- Make sure staff are able to practice hand hygiene.

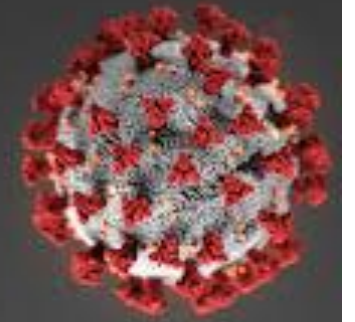
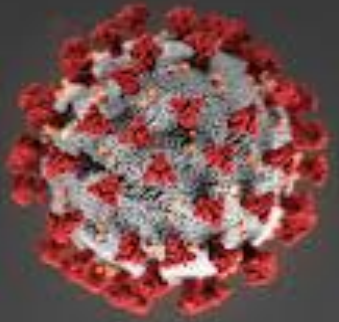
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Keep
handwashing
messaging simple



- Wash hands frequently
- Wash hands thoroughly with lots of soap for 20 seconds

Simple actions to promote handwashing



1

Handwashing facilities and soap

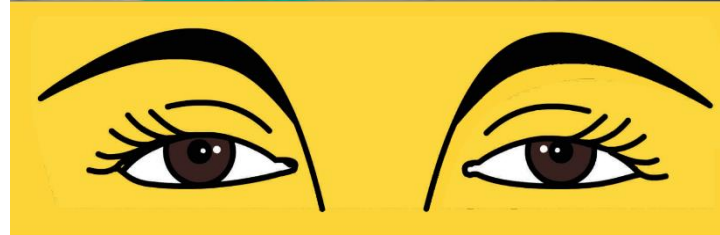


- In locations where people gather
 - Entrances to buildings
 - Where food is prepared or eaten
- Must have soap!
- Must be maintained

2

Cue behaviour

Make handwashing
automatic, hard to avoid,
socially judged and desirable.



3

Change
messaging and
keep it fun and
surprising.

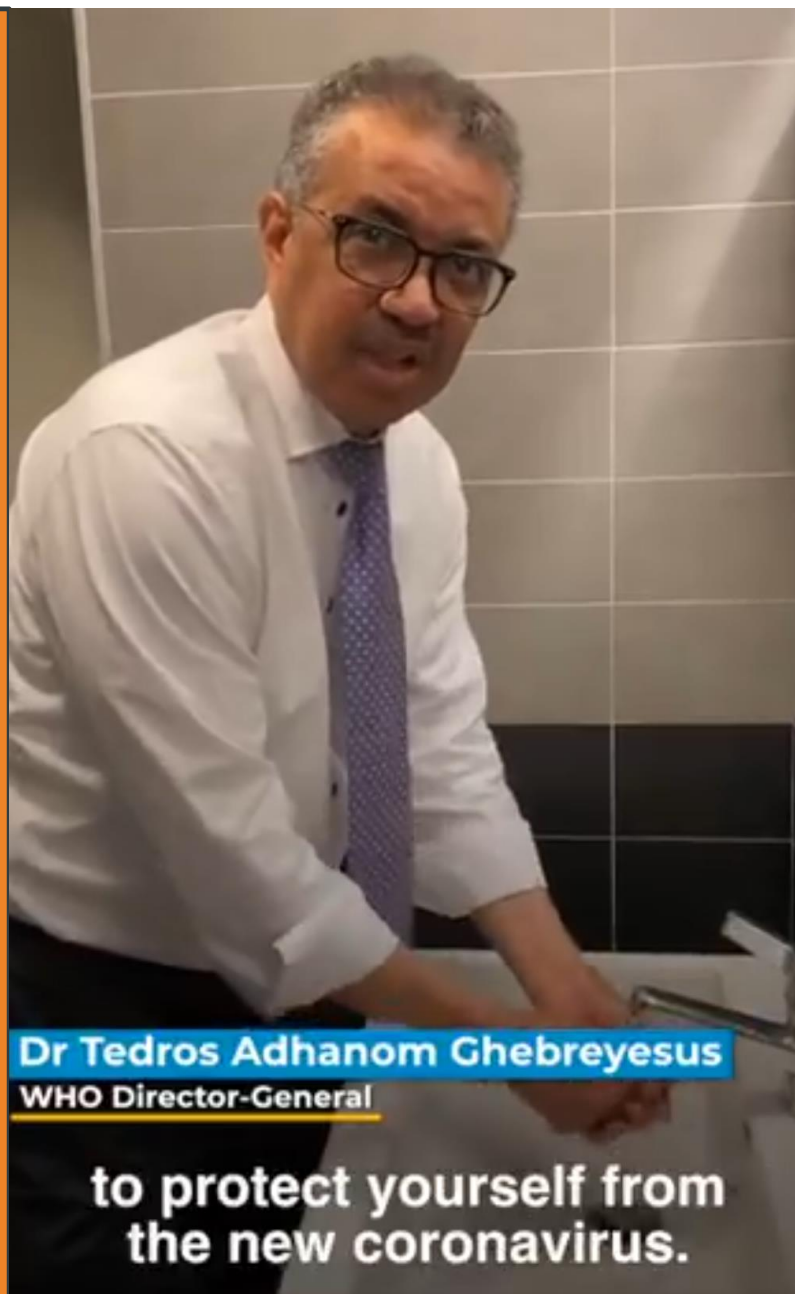


The future is in your hands • Don't get caught germy handed. • **Drown a bug, save a life.** • So you want to change the world – start by washing your hands! • **Stop!** Handwashing is practiced here. • Washed hands are caring hands. • What are the top ten carriers of infection? Answer: each one of your fingers. • Did you know germs can live on your hands for 3 days? • **Lifesaving soap available here** • Clean up your act • See sink? Use soap • **Don't be a dirty soap dodger** • Is the person next to you washing with soap? • **Note: This soap is not just for decoration** • Take a moment to refresh – wash hands with soap • **Others are watching – better wash your hands** • Happiness is: being around people who clean their hands • **What have you just touched?** • Did you know there are 3200 germs on your hands right now! • **Unwashed hands. Eewww!** • Clean hands deserve two thumbs up • **Clean hands make the world go round.** • **Stop** - in the name of soap - before you break my heart!

4

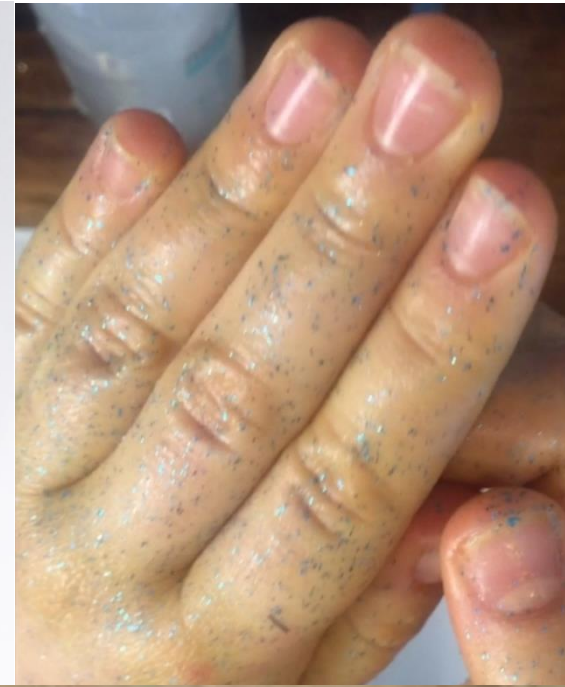
Make
handwashing
normative.

#SafeHands
#Handwashing
Hero



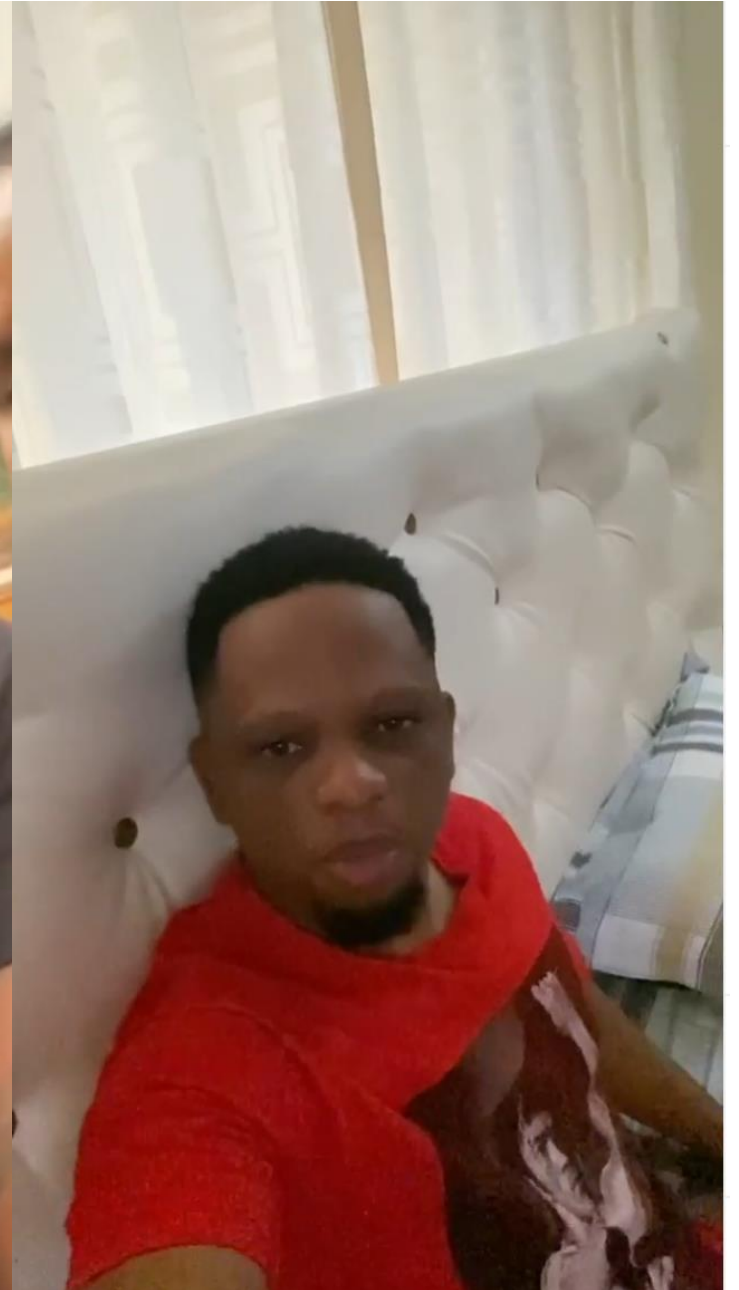
5

Remind people
that soap is
incredible!



6

**Challenge
misconceptions
with real
experiences**





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