

INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL HYGIENE

Personal hygiene

Personal hygiene are practices performed by an individual to care for one's bodily health and well being through cleanliness. Many people equate hygiene with 'cleanliness' but hygiene is a broad term including including personal habits choices as how frequently to bathe ,wash hands, trim fingernails and change clothing. Also includes keeping the environment clean and pathogen free.

Components of personal hygiene.

Personal hygiene has many components, Following these components one may be able to advance his/her hygiene the following are some;

- Face hygiene
- Fingernail & Toenail hygiene
- Ear hygiene
- Hair hygiene
- Foot hygiene
- Environmental cleanliness

Hygiene generally refers to the set of practices associated with the preservation of health and healthy living. The focus is mainly on personal hygiene that looks at cleanliness of the hair,body, hands, fingers, feet and clothing, and menstrual hygiene.

Sanitation means the prevention of human contact with wastes, for hygienic purposes. It also means promoting health through the prevention of human contact with the hazards associated with the lack of healthy food, clean water and healthful housing, the control of **vectors** (living organisms that transmit diseases), and a clean environment. It focuses on management of waste produced by human activities.

There are different types of sanitation relating to particular situations, such as:

- **Basic sanitation:** refers to the management of human faeces at the household level. It means access to a toilet or latrine.
- **Onsite sanitation:** the collection and treatment of waste at the place where it is deposited.
- **Food sanitation:** refers to the hygienic measures for ensuring food safety. Food hygiene is similar to food sanitation.
- **Housing sanitation:** refers to safeguarding the home environment (the dwelling and its immediate environment).
- **Environmental sanitation:** the control of environmental factors that form links in disease transmission. This category includes solid waste management, water and wastewater treatment, industrial waste treatment and noise and pollution control.
- **Ecological sanitation:** the concept of recycling the nutrients from human and animal wastes to the environment.

Personal hygiene is a concept that is commonly used in medical and public health practices. It is also widely practiced at the individual level and at home. It involves maintaining the cleanliness of our body and clothes. Personal hygiene is personal, as its name implies. In this regard, personal hygiene is defined as a condition promoting sanitary practices to the self. Everybody has their own habits and standards that they have been taught or that they have learned from others. Generally, the practice of personal hygiene is employed to prevent or minimize the incidence and spread of communicable diseases.

Difference between cleanliness and hygiene

The term **cleanliness** should not be used in place of hygiene. Cleaning in many cases is removing dirt, wastes or unwanted things from the surface of objects using detergents and necessary equipment. Hygiene practice focuses on the prevention of diseases through the use of cleaning as one of several inputs. For example, a janitor cleans the floor of a health centre using detergent, mop and broom. They might also use chlorine solution to disinfect the floor. The cleaning process in this example is the removal of visible dirt, while the use of chlorine solution removes the invisible microorganisms. Hygienic practice encompasses both cleaning for the removal of physically observable matters *and* the use of chlorine for the removal of microorganisms. The hygiene practice in this example aims at preventing the spread of disease-causing organisms. Cleaning is a means to achieve this task.

Public health importance of personal hygiene

The knowledge and practice of personal hygiene are vital in all our everyday activities. The purposes are:

Preventing faeco-orally transmitted diseases

The fingers may get contaminated with one's own faeces, either directly or indirectly. Activities during defecation and child bottom-washing are additional opportunities for the contamination of the fingers that facilitate the transmission of infections.

Aesthetic values of personal hygiene

A person with clean hands is proud while eating because they feel confident of preventing diseases. A teacher in a school is always happy to see their students with clean faces and eyes, and dressed in clean clothes. A mother is mentally satisfied to feed her infant with clean hands because she ensures the preservation of her child's health. Generally, cleaning oneself produces pride, comfort and dignity at home and in public places. Caring about the way you look is important to your self-esteem.

Social impact

A person with poor personal hygiene might be isolated from friendship because telling the person about the situation might be sensitive and culturally difficult. The success of a job application or the chance of promotion could be affected by poor personal hygiene; no company wants to be represented by someone who does not appear to be able to look after themselves.

Components of personal hygiene

Body hygiene (skin care)

The body has nearly two million sweat glands. Moistened and dried sweat and dead skin cells all together make dirt that sticks on to the skin and the surface of underclothes. The action of bacteria decomposes the sweat, thereby generating bad odour and irritating the skin. This is especially observed in the groin, underarms and feet, and in clothing that has absorbed sweat.

Skin infections such as scabies, pimples and ringworm are results of poor body hygiene.

The first task in body hygiene is to find water, soap and other cleansing materials. Taking a bath or a shower using body soap at least weekly is very important to ensuring our body stays clean. Bathing can be every day or after periods of sweating or getting dirty. The genitals and the anal region need to be cleaned well because of the natural secretions of these areas. Dry the body with a clean towel after thorough rinsing. Change into clean underwear after a bath. Changing sweat-soaked clothes after each bath is advised. Cleaning the ears after every bath is also necessary. Avoid sharing soaps and towels because of the danger of cross-infection.

Oral hygiene (oral care)

The mouth is the area of the body most prone to collecting harmful bacteria and generating infections. Our mouth mechanically breaks food into pieces. This process leaves food particles (food debris) that stick to the surface of our gums and teeth. Our mouth cavity is full of bacteria and is a good environment for bacterial growth.

The decaying process that takes place on the surface of the teeth eventually produces a build-up called *plaque* (a sticky deposit on which bacteria grow) that is then converted into *tartar* (a hard, yellowish, calcified deposit on the teeth, consisting of organic secretions and food particles). The result is tooth decay. In addition, unpleasant smelling breath (*halitosis* or *stinking odour*), teeth and gum infections could be a result of poor oral hygiene.

Handwashing (hand care)

The cleanliness of our hands is very important in all our daily activities. In our normal activities our hands frequently get dirty. There are many situations in which microorganisms are likely to attach to our hands along with the dirt. There are many communicable diseases that follow the route of faeco-oral transmission. Hand hygiene plays a critically important role in preventing this transmission.

Hygienic handwashing involves the mechanical removal of microorganisms from contaminated hand surfaces using soap or detergent. Handwashing should involve more than a quick rinse under a tap (faucet) or in running water.

Handwashing technique.

- First wet your hands with clean water and lather with a bar of soap.
 - Next rub your hands together vigorously and scrub all surfaces up to your wrists.
 - Clean under your fingernails.
 - Continue for 15–30 seconds or about the length of a little tune (for example, the ‘Happy Birthday’ song). It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
 - Rinse your hands well with clean running water (pour from a jug or tap).
 - Dry your hands in the air to avoid recontamination on a dirty towel – do not touch anything until your hands are dry.
-
- Wood ash will also rub off any dirt and smells. The slight irritation you feel when you wash your hands with ash shows the cleansing power of ash.
 - Local seeds such as *indod* (Lemma’s plant), which are known to be good cleaning agents,

- can also be used for regular handwashing.
- Clean sand with water can be used for handwashing to help to rub off dirt.

If you don't have soap, you can use alternatives. These serve the same purpose as the soap, to help 'scrub' what is stuck on your hands, so the running water can brush it off. To get clean hands, you must POUR the water over your hands (no dipping in a bowl!). The soap or ash 'lifts' the dirt, and the water then washes off the visible dirt and the invisible germs.

As well as routine personal hygiene that applies to everyone, your daily work will include many situations when you may ask yourself when you need to wash your hands. To know when to wash your hands at home and at work, you must first identify **critical situations**; that is, situations, activities or incidents that indicate the possibility that pathogenic microorganisms are present on hands, fingers and nail surfaces.

Conclusion:

1. Personal hygiene is a necessity for our daily activities. It is very important for the protection of our health and helps to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
2. Personal hygiene has social and aesthetic values. An individual who follows the practice of proper personal hygiene gains confidence, pride and dignity.
3. Personal hygiene applies to all parts of the body, but hand hygiene is probably the most important for public health.
4. The procedures that apply in personal hygiene (such as handwashing and oral hygiene) need to be followed strictly to gain the best results.
5. The promotion of personal hygiene should aim to change human behaviour. The provision of hygiene information first impacts on knowledge and then practice.
6. The promotion of personal hygiene must be well planned in order to bring positive changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE

Environmental health is broader than hygiene and sanitation; it encompasses hygiene, sanitation and many other aspects of the environment that are not included in this Module such as global warming, climate change, radiation, gene technology, flooding and natural disasters. It also involves studying the environmental factors that affect health.

The World Health Organization's definition is as follows:

Environmental health addresses all the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all the related factors impacting behaviours. It encompasses the assessment and control of those environmental factors that can potentially affect health

