NATIONAL GROUNDWATER AWARENESS WEEK
March 8-14, 2020

CDC Center for Disease Control and Preventions

Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene-related Observances

Water is the most precious global commodity with its myriad uses for drinking, recreation, sanitation, hygiene, agriculture, and industry. In recognition of the importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene, and in an effort to educate the public about water-related issues, many water,

sanitation, and hygiene-related observances, celebrations and awareness days have been created.

2020 National Groundwater Awareness Week

March 8 - March 14 2020

2020 National Groundwater Awareness Week will take place on March 8-14, 2020. Groundwater accounts for 33 percent of all the water used by U.S. municipalities, and 44 percent of the U.S. population depends on groundwater for its drinking water supply. Groundwater is the world's most extracted raw material with withdrawal rates in the estimated range of 259 trillion gallons per year.

Groundwater Awareness Week

Much of the water we use comes from the ground. Learn more about the importance of groundwater, the threats to its safety, and how to protect its sources during Groundwater Awareness Week.

Water is one of the world's most precious resources. People use water every day for many activities, such as drinking, bathing, recreation, agriculture, cooling, manufacturing, and medical uses. Although water plays an essential role in everyday life, many people don't realize that much of their water comes from the ground.

Groundwater is water found below the earth's surface in spaces between rock and soil. Surface water is water that collects above the earth's surface, such as streams, rivers, lakes, or oceans. Thirty percent of all the fresh water on Earth is groundwater, while the other 70% is surface water. Groundwater supplies water to wells and springs and is an important source of water for public water systems and private wells in the United States.

An estimated 145 million Americans get their tap water from a groundwater source.

National Groundwater Awareness Weekexternal icon, an annual observance sponsored by the National Groundwater Association (NGWA)external icon, is March 8–14, 2020. This observance highlights how important groundwater is to people's health and the environment.

Groundwater Contamination

All groundwater sources should be protected from contamination (germs and harmful chemicals).

Protecting the safety of groundwater is an important priority for countries throughout the world, including the United States. Most of the time, U.S. groundwater is safe to use. However, groundwater sources can become contaminated with germs, such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites, and chemicals, such as those used in fertilizers and pesticides. Contaminated groundwater can make people sick.

Water infrastructure requires regular maintenance.

Groundwater sometimes contains naturally present germs and harmful chemicals from the environment, such as arsenic and radon. More often, however, human activities contaminate ground water. These human causes can include incorrect use of fertilizers and pesticides; poorly situated, constructed, or maintained septic systems; improper removal or storage of wastes; mining and construction; and chemical spills at work sites.

Contamination of groundwater systems can lead to outbreaks of disease. Previous outbreaks have occurred either because the groundwater was untreated or because of problems with water treatment. The most common germs identified in groundwater outbreaks include:

- *Shigella*
- Hepatitis A
- Norovirus
- *Giardia*
- *Campylobacter*
- *Salmonella*

Other germs that cause outbreaks from groundwater include *Cryptosporidium* (a parasite), *E. coli* (a bacterium), and assorted viruses. From 2009 to 2017, 96 outbreaks linked to groundwater systems were reported to CDC.

You can learn more about some of the most common environmental chemicals that may be found in community water supplies by visiting CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network.

The presence of germs and harmful chemicals in our ground water can lead to health problems, including diarrhea, reproductive problems, and nervous system disorders. Infants, young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people whose immune systems are weakened because of HIV/AIDS, chemotherapy, or transplant medicines may be more likely to get sick from certain germs and chemicals.

Concerns for groundwater contaminants led the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and individual states to develop regulations to protect public water systems, such as the 2006 Ground Water Ruleexternal icon.

Is Your Water From a Groundwater Source?

Private well owners should have their water tested annually.

Public Water Systems

One-third of Americans — more than 102 million people — get their drinking water from public water systems that use groundwater. The EPA regulates drinking water quality in public water systems. You can find out more about your local drinking water quality and possible contaminants by viewing your Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), which most utility companies are required to provide to customers.

Private Wells

An estimated 43 million Americans get their water from private groundwater wells, which are not subject to EPA regulations. Private groundwater wells can provide safe, clean water. However, contamination that can cause sickness also can occur in well water. If you have a well, you should take steps to protect it and have the water tested annually to make sure your water is safe from harmful germs and chemicals. State and local health departments provide information to help well users protect their drinking water.

HEALTHY WATER TOPICS

With its many uses for drinking, recreation, sanitation, hygiene, and industry, water is our most precious global resource. Clean and safe drinking water is critical to sustain human life and without it waterborne illness can be a serious problem. Water, which is necessary for recreational water activities like swimming, also helps promote healthy living. Often, water's vital role is most apparent during an emergency or disaster. We launched the Healthy Water website to provide answers to your water-related questions.

Healthy Water Topics

Public water systems, private water systems, water fluoridation, camping, hiking, travel...

Pools and spas, oceans/lakes/rivers, injury and skin cancer, recreational water illnesses...

Handwashing, body washing, facial cleanliness, hygiene etiquette...

Body, Facial, & Dental Hygiene

Many diseases and conditions can be prevented or controlled through appropriate personal hygiene and by frequently washing parts of the body and hair with soap and clean, running water (if available). Good body washing practices can prevent the spread of hygiene-related diseases.

Keeping Hands Clean

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Learn when and how you should wash your hands to stay healthy.

Wash Your Hands Often to Stay Healthy

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

- **Before, during,** and **after** preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **Before** and **after** caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut or wound
- **After** using the toilet
- **After** changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- **After** handling pet food or pet treats
- **After** touching garbage

Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.

4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Why? Read the science behind the recommendations.

Use Hand Sanitizer When You Can't Use Soap and Water

You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However,

- Sanitizers do **not** get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

Caution! Swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning if more than a couple of mouthfuls are swallowed. Keep it out of reach of young children and supervise their use. Learn more here.

How to use hand sanitizer

- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.
  - New Handwashing Campaign: *Life is Better with Clean Hands*
  - To celebrate Global Handwashing Day on October 15, CDC has launched the *Life is Better with Clean Hands* campaign. This campaign encourages adults to make handwashing part of their everyday life and encourages parents to wash their hands to set a good example for their kids. Visit the *Life is Better with Clean Hands* campaign page to download resources to help promote handwashing in your community.
  - For more information on handwashing, visit CDC's Handwashing website or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

This material was developed by CDC. The Life is Better with Clean Hands Campaign is made possible by a partnership between the CDC Foundation, GOJO, and Staples. HHS/CDC does not endorse commercial products, services, or companies.

CDC launched *Life is Better with Clean Hands*, a new national campaign designed to motivate adults to make clean hands part of their daily lives. The campaign resources below are designed to help raise awareness about the importance of handwashing at key times in both homes and public settings, such as before cooking or after using the bathroom. Download and share them to help spread the word and encourage handwashing within your community.