

2m children die of diarrhoea and pneumonia each year

Handwashing with soap can reduce diarrhoeal risk by **45%**

Handwashing with soap can reduce pneumonia risk by **23%**

It costs just **\$3.35** to invest in handwashing – which brings about the same health benefits as an \$11 investment in toilets or a \$200 investment in household water supply

Handwashing with soap can reduce school absenteeism by between **20-50%**

Child Mortality: Diarrhoea and Pneumonia

- Diarrhoea and pneumonia are the two leading killers of children, accounting for 29% of under 5 deaths globally – claiming more than two million lives each year (estimates 2 million)
- More than 80% of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia
- Every year, 759,000 children under 5 die due to diarrhoea
- Each year, 1.242 million children under 5 die from pneumonia¹

The benefits of handwashing with soap – reducing disease

- Handwashing with soap at critical times – before eating or preparing food and after using the toilet – **can reduce diarrhoeal risk by 45%**²
- Handwashing with soap can reduce the incidence of acute respiratory infections (ARIs), such as **pneumonia, by 23 per cent**³
- Handwashing by mothers and birth attendants was associated with a 40–44% reduction in neonatal mortality in a recent study in Nepal⁴
- Handwashing with soap prevents trachoma and ascaris infections⁵

- Handwashing with soap is an effective control measure in pandemics such as SARS⁶ and Pandemic Flu⁷ Several studies carried out during the 2006 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) suggest that washing hands more than 10 times a day can cut the spread of the respiratory virus by 55%⁸

Cost-effectiveness

Handwashing with soap is the single most cost-effective health intervention. A \$3.35 investment in handwashing brings the same health benefits as an \$11.00 investment in latrine construction, a \$200.00 investment in household water supply, and an investment of thousands of dollars in immunisation.⁹

The benefits of handwashing with soap and schools

New studies suggest that handwashing promotion in schools can play a role in reducing absenteeism among primary school children. In China, Colombia and Egypt primary school absenteeism due to diarrhoea or and respiratory infections dropped between 20% and 50% as a result of better handwashing practices.¹⁰





End notes

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