

# The Wellness Express™



Jump on the train to good health

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## What You Might Not Know About Antibacterial Soap

Presented by: Dr. Mark Glesener

It's sniffle season again. Sneezing, fever, runny nose will all be back for an encore performance inside your stuffy head. Must the show go on? If you would rather skip the common cold event this year, you can help clobber bad bugs by washing your hands frequently and thoroughly. It is one of the easiest and most cost effective things you can do to lower your risk of getting infected, but should you opt for antibacterial soap over regular soap? After all, colds and flu are caused by viruses - not bacteria. Let's take a closer look at some of the controversy over these products.

### The Problems with Antibacterial Soap

Regular soap is just as effective as anti-bacterial soap – scientific research proves it. Regular soap is cheaper and does not cause health and environmental issues.

Here are some other reasons for concerns about antibacterial soap:

#### Creates Resistant Bacteria

Antibacterial ingredients do not destroy *all* contaminants. As a defense tactic, the bacteria that survive may

mutate and become resistant to the cleansing chemicals in the soap.

Antibacterial residue often remains on hands even after washing. This provides the opportunity for superbugs to develop, which cannot be destroyed by antibiotics.

#### Contains Harmful Ingredients

Substances used in some soaps, especially the antibacterial variety, often contain harmful ingredients that can endanger your health and the environment.

One study found people over 18 years of age who used antibacterial soap were exposed to higher levels of bisphenol A. This substance has been banned by many countries over its role as an endocrine disruptor and may negatively affect your hormones. In research published by the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan medical investigators noted that bisphenol A appeared to alter immune function. People with higher exposures to this substance from antibacterial products were more likely to be diagnosed with allergies or hay fever.<sup>1</sup>

### Exercise of the Week

Cobra pose – lumbar extension

Difficulty: Moderate

*(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** On hands and knees. Be aware of position of spine – start with a neutral spine or a flat back.

**Exercise:** Allow hips to lower toward floor, keeping arms in a vertical position with shoulders back. Try to achieve a fully extended lower back. Hold for 10-30 seconds.



Presented by: Dr. Mark Glesener - Fox Valley Chiropractic  
1750 East Main Street, Suite 60, St. Charles, IL 60174  
[p]: (630) 377-8844 - [w]: www.drglesener.com

Another chemical often found in soaps, especially antibacterial types, is triclosan. It is also classified as an endocrine disruptor. Frequent exposure of triclosan can lead to an increased risk of developing allergies.<sup>1</sup> It may also be a carcinogen (substances linked to cancer).

In a review of antibacterial soap studies conducted between 1980 and 2006, the researchers remarked that results indicates that “Soaps containing triclosan within the range of concentrations commonly used in the community setting were no more effective than plain soap at preventing infectious illness symptoms and reducing bacterial levels on the hands.” They also noted triclosan can assist in the development of bacteria resistance to antibiotics.<sup>2</sup>

Another alarming fact about triclosan is it has infiltrated our environment, especially in streams and rivers. While many dioxins have decreased over the last three decades, the levels of triclosan-related dioxins in the environment have surged 200% to 300%.<sup>3</sup>

## No Way to Treat a Virus

Do antibacterial soaps have the power to kill viruses? No, viruses are more robust than bacteria and have a stronger ability to resist disinfection. The University of North Carolina conducted a large study on antibacterial products and found washing with regular soap was the best way to remove viruses from your hands. The lathering action of the soap is what lifts both viruses and bacteria off your body. The same research also discovered that waterless hand wipes only remove about 50% of bacteria from your hands.<sup>4</sup>

## How to Your Wash Hands – Effectively!

Proper hand washing technique makes all the difference in the world when it comes to ridding your hands of germs. Follow this procedure:

1. Wet your hands with running water.
2. Apply soap and create an ample lather.
3. Rub your hands thoroughly for a minimum of 20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
4. Dry well with an air dryer or clean, disposable towel. (Tip: If a towel is accessible, also use it to turn off the faucet.)

No water available? The next best option is to use an alcohol-based sanitizer. Look for sanitizers with about 60% alcohol for best results.

Does washing with water alone offer any protection? “No” say medical researchers. You need the soapy lather to lift the germs off your hands.

You may also want to shop around for soap with natural ingredients, rather than opting for chemical heavy soaps that may contain unsafe substances.



## Quote to Inspire

*"A family is a unit composed not only of children but of men, women, an occasional animal, and the common cold."*

Ogden Nash

## References and sources:

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Editor & writer: David Coyne

Writer: Dr. Christian Guenette, DC

Design: Elena Zhukova

Graphics: Faith Ruba

Photos: Fred Goldstein

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