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Women wash hands more often than men

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23 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Women wash hands more often than men

BNE: Women clean up and beat men hands down when it comes to washing their hands after using a public lavatory. A new observational study* from the U.S. reveals that women are more conscientious in practicing hygiene habits than men in public toilets. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) monitored the washroom habits of thousands of people in restrooms in four major U.S. cities. It found 90 percent of women washed their hands, compared with 75 percent of men. A parallel telephone survey revealed that men and women perhaps exaggerate how hygienic they are, with 97 percent of women and 96 percent of men saying they always or usually wash their hands after using a public restroom.

Dr. Judy Daly of the ASM advised: "One of the most effective tools in preventing the spread of infection is literally at our fingertips. The single most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. Flu viruses are readily transferred from unclean hands." She explained that contrary to what many people believe, cold and flu viruses are spread by hands more often than through airborne transmission from sneezing. However, the study found only 42 percent wash after petting a dog or cat, 32 percent after coughing or sneezing and 21 percent after handling money. Unbeknown to most, 75 percent to 95 percent of banknotes and coins are contaminated with illness-causing bacteria.

* <http://www.washup.org/>

WARM-UPS

1. I'M CLEAN: In pairs / groups, talk about how clean you are. How often do you wash your hands, bathe, shower, clean your teeth, wash your hair, etc? Do you think you should wash more often?

2. BACTERIA ALERT: We are surrounded by bacteria and viruses, which of course we cannot see. With your partner(s), discuss the potential dangers of the following situations. What should you do to reduce the danger of picking up an infection?

- a. Visiting a public lavatory
- b. Eating at a public restaurant
- c. Petting dogs or cats
- d. Going shopping
- e. Using a public telephone or a computer in an Internet café
- f. Attending an English class

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Women / men / washing one's hands / public lavatories / hygiene / microbiology / fingertips / infections / getting sick / viruses / sneezing / dogs / banknotes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TOILETS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with toilets. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. MEN vs. WOMEN DEBATES: Debate each of the arguments below with a partner for just two minutes, before moving on to the next partner and debate. Student A agrees with the first argument, Student B, the second.

- a. Women are cleaner than men. vs. Men have better personal hygiene habits.
- b. Men are more intelligent than women. vs. Women are the ones with the brains.
- c. Women are funnier than men. vs. Men are much better at telling jokes.
- d. Men are more honest than women. vs. Women are more honest than men.
- e. Women are better dressed than men. vs. Men have the better sense of style.
- f. Men are more interesting than women. vs. Women are more interesting.
- g. Women are more sensible than men. vs. Men have the common sense.
- h. Men are kinder than women. vs. Women are a hundred times kinder than men.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Women are obsessed when it comes to washing their hands. T / F
- b. A study looked at hygiene habits in American lavatories. T / F
- c. Only 35 percent of American men wash their hands in public toilets. T / F
- d. In telephone interviews, people exaggerated how hygienic they are. T / F
- e. A doctor recommended buying effective tools to prevent infections. T / F
- f. The single most important way of staying healthy is to get a flu jab. T / F
- g. Most colds are spread via airborne transmission from sneezing. T / F
- h. Banknotes and coins are contaminated with illness-causing bacteria. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. clean up | infected |
| b. hands down | truly |
| c. conscientious | overstate |
| d. parallel | easily |
| e. exaggerate | opposite |
| f. literally | diligent |
| g. contrary | oblivious |
| h. transmission | win |
| i. unbeknown | passing on |
| j. contaminated | corresponding |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. beat men hands | exaggerate how hygienic they are |
| b. when it comes | transmission |
| c. women are more conscientious in | to most |
| d. a parallel | practicing hygiene habits |
| e. men and women perhaps | the spread of infection |
| f. effective tools in preventing | with illness-causing bacteria |
| g. contrary to | down |
| h. airborne | what many people believe |
| i. Unbeknown | to washing their hands |
| j. contaminated | telephone survey |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHICH WORD? Strike through the incorrect word in the *italicized* pairs.

Women wash hands more often than men

BNE: Women clean up and beat men hands *up / down* when it *goes / comes* to washing their hands after using a public lavatory. A new observational study from the U.S. reveals that women are more *conscientious / consecutive* in practicing hygiene habits than men in public toilets. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) monitored the washroom *habits / habitats* of thousands of people in restrooms in four major U.S. cities. It found 90 percent of women washed their hands, compared with 75 percent of men. A *parallel / paranoid* telephone survey revealed that men and women perhaps *exonerate / exaggerate* how hygienic they are, with 97 percent of women and 96 percent of men saying they always or usually wash their hands after using a public restroom.

Dr. Judy Daly of the ASM advised: "One of the most effective tools in preventing the spread of infection is *literally / figuratively* at our fingertips. The *single / double* most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. Flu viruses are *readily / ready-made* transferred from unclean hands." She explained that *contrary / controversial* to what many people believe, cold and flu viruses are spread by hands more often than through *airy-fairy / airborne* transmission from sneezing. However, the study found only 42 percent wash after petting a dog or cat, 32 percent after coughing or sneezing and 21 percent after handling money. *Unbeknown / Unbecoming* to most, 75 percent to 95 percent of banknotes and coins are contaminated with illness-causing bacteria.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'telephone'** and **'survey'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHICH WORD? In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "HYGIENE" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about hygiene and washing your hands.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- beat
- conscientious
- habits
- parallel
- exaggerate
- always
- effective
- single
- readily
- transmission
- petting
- contaminated

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Are you very conscientious when it comes to personal hygiene?
- d. Do you wash your hands without fail every time you go to the toilet?
- e. What do you think of public toilets?
- f. Do you have a special routine every time you use a public toilet?
- g. What is the worst public toilet you have ever used?
- h. How do the public toilets in your country compare with those in other countries?
- i. Why do you think women are more hygienic than men?
- j. Do you think people in your country are very hygienic?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you do to keep from getting sick?
- d. Do you think people from your country wash their hands more or less often than Americans?
- e. Do you worry about infectious diseases?
- f. Do you often come down with colds or the flu?
- g. How often do you wash your hands after sneezing or petting animals?
- h. What do you think about banknotes and coins being contaminated with illness-causing bacteria?
- i. Will you wash your hands more often after this lesson?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

WASH YOUR HANDS: In pairs / groups, talk about how you can prevent the spread of infection in your everyday lives. Write down the things you touch throughout your day. Discuss the potential risks of spreading or contracting infections. Think of the hygienic actions you could take to reduce the risks.

	THINGS I TOUCH	RISKS	HYGIENE ACTIONS
Breakfast			
Going to work / school			
At work / school			
After work / school			
Weekends			
Other			

Change partners and tell each other what you previously talked about.

Discuss whether or not the risks are real and whether people in your country would take your hygiene actions seriously.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Women wash hands more often than men

BNE: Women clean up and beat men _____ when it comes to washing their hands after using a public lavatory. A new observational study from the U.S. _____ that women are more conscientious in practicing hygiene habits than men in public toilets. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) _____ the washroom habits of thousands of people in restrooms in four major U.S. cities. It found 90 percent of women washed their hands, _____ 75 percent of men. A parallel telephone survey revealed that men and women perhaps _____ how hygienic they are, with 97 percent of women and 96 percent of men saying they always or usually wash their hands after using a public restroom.

Dr. Judy Daly of the ASM advised: "One of the most _____ tools in preventing the spread of infection is _____ at our fingertips. The single most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. Flu _____ are readily transferred from unclean hands." She explained that contrary to what many people believe, cold and flu viruses are spread by hands more often than through _____ transmission from sneezing. However, the study found only 42 percent wash after _____ a dog or cat, 32 percent after coughing or sneezing and 21 percent after handling money. _____ to most, 75 percent to 95 percent of banknotes and coins are _____ with illness-causing bacteria.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on personal hygiene. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. HYGIENE: Make a poster describing how to prevent catching colds or the flu. What personal hygiene measures should people practice on a daily basis. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are a bacterium on a banknote. Write the diary / journal entry for one day in your life. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. clean up | win |
| b. hands down | easily |
| c. conscientious | diligent |
| d. parallel | corresponding |
| e. exaggerate | overstate |
| f. literally | truly |
| g. contrary | opposite |
| h. transmission | passing on |
| i. unbeknown | oblivious |
| j. contaminated | infected |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. beat men hands | down |
| b. when it comes | to washing their hands |
| c. women are more conscientious in | practicing hygiene habits |
| d. a parallel | telephone survey |
| e. men and women perhaps | exaggerate how hygienic they are |
| f. effective tools in preventing | the spread of infection |
| g. contrary to | what many people believe |
| h. airborne | transmission |
| i. Unbeknown | to most |
| j. contaminated | with illness-causing bacteria |

WHICH WORD?

Women wash hands more often than men

BNE: Women clean up and beat men hands ~~up~~ / down when it ~~goes~~ / comes to washing their hands after using a public lavatory. A new observational study from the U.S. reveals that women are more *conscientious* / ~~consecutive~~ in practicing hygiene habits than men in public toilets. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) monitored the washroom *habits* / ~~habitats~~ of thousands of people in restrooms in four major U.S. cities. It found 90 percent of women washed their hands, compared with 75 percent of men. A *parallel* / ~~paranoid~~ telephone survey revealed that men and women perhaps ~~exonerate~~ / *exaggerate* how hygienic they are, with 97 percent of women and 96 percent of men saying they always or usually wash their hands after using a public restroom.

Dr. Judy Daly of the ASM advised: "One of the most effective tools in preventing the spread of infection is *literally* / ~~figuratively~~ at our fingertips. The *single* / ~~double~~ most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. Flu viruses are *readily* / ~~ready-made~~ transferred from unclean hands." She explained that *contrary* / ~~controversial~~ to what many people believe, cold and flu viruses are spread by hands more often than through ~~airy-fairy~~ / *airborne* transmission from sneezing. However, the study found only 42 percent wash after petting a dog or cat, 32 percent after coughing or sneezing and 21 percent after handling money. ~~Unbeknown~~ / ~~Unbecoming~~ to most, 75 percent to 95 percent of banknotes and coins are contaminated with illness-causing bacteria.