

Why Wash? Challenge

Materials

Vaseline-glitter mixture in zipper bag (See Getting Ready.) • pitcher of water • bucket • foaming pump soap • paper towels

Getting Ready

Place 2 tablespoons (about 30 mL) petroleum jelly in a bottom corner of a plastic bag. Add 1 tablespoon (about 15 mL) ultra fine cosmetic-grade glitter. Close the bag and knead until well mixed. Make an angled cut to remove a corner of the plastic bag.



Procedure

- 1 Have your partner squeeze a pea-sized amount of glitter mixture through the cut corner of the bag onto your hands. Rub your hands together to thoroughly coat the palm, back, and between the fingers. The glitter mixture represents “germs.”
- 2 Hold your hands over the bucket and have your partner pour a little water over your hands to wet them. Rub your hands together. Have your partner pour more water over your hands to rinse them. Dry your hands with a paper towel.

How well did rinsing and drying your hands remove “germs”?

- 3 Hold your hands over the bucket and have your partner squirt some foam soap into your hands. Rub your hands together. Have your partner pour more water over your hands to rinse them. Dry your hands with a paper towel.

How clean are your hands this time?

Explanation

The glitter used to represent germs in this activity is much bigger than actual germs. Germs can be harmful because they can cause disease or infection, but other microorganisms (such as some bacteria) found on our hands are harmless to us.

Unfortunately, some people rarely wash their hands and, of those who do, most overestimate how thoroughly they do it. You’ve probably seen some people in the public restroom quickly rinse their hands with water and use no soap. This activity uses glitter to show that lots of germs are left on the hands after a quick rinse with water. Using soap really helps to clean the hands.

This activity was adapted from *Lather Up! Hand Washing Activity Handbook*
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