



Activity 4. Glo Germ

Handwashing Activity Overview

The purpose of the glo germ handwashing activity is to teach proper handwashing techniques and to show how easily germs can spread. You can use this activity with your volunteers and youth who work with animals, volunteer in 4-H food booths, or participate in cook-off events. In this activity, there are “props” that will be passed around such as stuffed animals, a rubber ball, or similar items. These items represent animals touched at a fair or farm or shared barn equipment (water buckets, stall rakes, wheelbarrows, hog panels, etc.). These items are wiped with glo germ powder or gel, which is not easily seen with the naked eye but “glow” with the use of a blacklight.

- **Directions:** Have people share the “props” by holding them and then passing them along to another person. You can keep one “germ-free” by not applying any glo germ powder to it. Use this one to show that although this item was not infected with pathogens/germs at the beginning, now that it was handled by many people who are exposed to “infected” props, it is contaminated (i.e. it glows) by the end of the activity, which is an important lesson in zoonotic disease prevention. Once the blacklight is used to show the glo germ on everyone’s hands, ask them to wash their hands as they normally would. Recheck their hands with the blacklight to determine how well they normally wash their hands.

- **Now have people wash their hands using proper techniques and check with a blacklight again after handwashing.**

What is the right way to wash your hands?

1. Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
3. Scrub all surfaces of your hands, including the palms, backs, fingers, between your fingers, and under your nails. Keep scrubbing for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
4. Rinse your hands under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them. Do not dry on clothes, which may be contaminated by germs.

- **Alternative Options:**
 - Start off a zoonotic disease workshop with glo germ on a greeter’s hands. Have them shake each person’s hand that enters the room. Once everyone is seated, demonstrate with the blacklight how germs travel unnoticeably.
 - Use glo germ on a cloth towel and then have people check their hands after handwashing and using the towel.

- As the trainer, apply powder on your hands and as youth complete the exercise shake their hands or give them a high-five to congratulate them. Then have them recheck their hands; new “germs” should appear on their hands.
- Let volunteers demonstrate how far germs can be aerosolized with the glo germ powder and blacklights. Ask them to guess how far germs from a cough would travel, then demonstrate it with glo germ.
- **Tips on how to organize hand washing stations at farms and fairs to maximize efficiency:**
 - **Tip 1:** Position hand washing stations near exit(s) so visitors cannot miss them such as where people exit an animal space to go to a non-animal space.
 - **Tip 2:** Ensure handwashing stations have running water and are accessible to children and persons with disabilities.
 - **Tip 3:** Have a plan in place for restocking paper towels, soap, and water.
 - **Tip 4:** Hand sanitizer can be offered where hand washing stations are not an option. Hand sanitizer should be used a supplement to soap and water rather than a replacement.
 - **Tip 5:** Have a plan in place for restocking hand sanitizer.