

**This week is handwashing awareness week.**

If you're anything like me, when we first heard about Covid, you were washing your hands and counting to 20 every time. You realized that you didn't normally wash that long and it seemed to go on forever. You looked for hand sanitizer everywhere. You wiped down your phone, keys, and anything else you may have touched while in the store. You wouldn't touch a shopping cart unless you had wiped down every surface you might touch while in the store getting your food. Then, as the months have dragged on, you started to suffer from Covid fatigue as I have. You aren't quite as careful about washing for the full 20 seconds or sanitizing your hands after every trip out of the house.

This is just a reminder for all of us that handwashing saves lives. Handwashing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related illnesses and 1 in 5 infections, including the flu. But we all need to do it correctly and do it often. Wash with soap for a minimum of 20 seconds, rubbing on all surfaces of our hands. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer. We need to wash often, not just after using the restroom. Here's a dirty little secret: only 31% of men and 65% of women wash their hands after using a public restroom. Let's change that! We also need to remember to wash before cooking, before eating, after blowing our nose (even if we're just dabbing those MN winter dribbles), before and after going into stores, our workplace, or someone's home, and after removing our mask. If you're not already, get in the habit of not coughing or sneezing into your hands. Use your elbow instead. Don't put your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth. Keeping our hands clean is more important than ever this year!