

Good personal hygiene: a fight against the spread of infectious diseases

Abstract

Good personal hygiene remains one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illnesses. Good personal hygiene such as frequent hand washing has been one of the means helpful in curtailing the spread of the Ebola virus. Hence, proper hygiene is mandatory to ensure global health and well being.

Volume 2 Issue 2 - 2015

Ofure Odigwe

Hospital Pharmacist, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria

Correspondence: Hospital Pharmacist, Olabisi Onabanjo University, No 1, Odigwe close, water pipeline road, Ile-isha bus stop, Akute, Ogun state, Nigeria, Tel 07010527333, Email ofureodigwe2007@yahoo.com

Received: March 23, 2015 | **Published:** March 31, 2015

Opinion

Sometimes one may be quick to associate an illness to the influence of external factors and other causes. However a lot can be done personally to ensure that we remain in good health by practicing good personal hygiene and keeping the environment safe from disease causing organisms. Personal hygiene cannot be over emphasized in ensuring good health and total well being.¹ How we treat our bodies and environment go a long way to determine our health. Our lifestyle and everyday habits influence our well being. Good personal hygiene remains one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illnesses. Good personal hygiene entails washing the hands frequently especially after using the toilet or touching possibly contaminated items, bathing regularly, being careful not to cough or sneeze on others, putting tissue and items containing body fluids into the bin after use, washing clothes regularly especially under wears and using protection (such as gloves) when you are at the risk of catching an infection. All these and several other simple steps of environmental sanitation such as cutting grasses around the environment and preventing the collection of stagnant water help to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

In developing and underdeveloped countries around the world which do not have sufficient modern technology and resources to combat epidemic, education on good personal hygiene will serve a major role in minimizing the risk of outbreak of infectious diseases. Enlightenment campaigns and workshops on the importance of good personal hygiene should be considered a priority and reinforced in communities and schools,² especially among the children and teenagers whose population group are usually the worst hit in times of epidemic. The Ebola epidemic which occurred in West Africa serves as a clear example of the importance of good hygienic practices,³ especially hand washing. The virus is spread through human to human transmission, with infection occurring from touching bodily fluids of a person who is sick or dies from the Ebola virus disease or exposure to contaminated objects. Frequent hand washing with soap or an alcohol based rub has been found to serve as a protective measure to reduce the possibility of contracting the disease. Although this must be done in addition to other essential measures such as avoiding trips

to affected areas, wearing personal protective equipment and proper and safe disposal of sharp objects (such as needles and syringes) which may be contaminated through bloody and bodily fluids.⁴

Frequent hand washing was introduced into schools nationwide in Nigeria as a means of preventing an epidemic during the Ebola scare. Good water facilities, soaps and alcohol based hand rubs were made available in large quantities in schools with the proper use of these resources being monitored by teachers and instructors.⁵ These measures have been helpful in curtailing the spread of the virus. Hence, proper hygiene is mandatory if we are to ensure global health and well being. However to achieve the greatest health benefits, improvements in hygiene should be made concurrently with improvement in the water supply and sanitation and be integrated with other interventions, such as improving nutrition and increasing incomes.⁶

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Aiello AE, Larson EL. What is the evidence for a causal link between hygiene and infections? *Lancet Infect Dis*. 2002;2(2):103–110.
2. Children in Crisis. *Ebola Prevention- Hygiene and Awareness*. UK: Children in Crisis, Reg. Charity Number: 1020488; 2013.
3. Shivastava SR, Prateek SS, Jegadeesh R. Lessons learnt from the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. *J Res Med Sci*. 2015;20(1):107–108.
4. McKay B, Loftus P. Ebola Virus: Experimental Drugs Approved for Use in Fighting Outbreak in West Africa. *The Wall Street Journal*. 2014.
5. SOS Children News. *Fighting Ebola as threat grows in West Africa*. West Africa: SOS Children's villages; 2014.
6. Howard G. *Healthy villages: a guide for communities and community health workers*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002.