

What the experts say: Coronavirus and hand hygiene

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Hand hygiene is a simple and effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19, yet only 60% of the world's population have a place to wash their hands. As initial fear of the pandemic subsides, so does momentum to keep handwashing going – creating a golden opportunity to promote behavior change and push through effective policy measures now.

Leadership on every level

Political commitment and investment from the top down to the village level is essential to supporting hygiene during a pandemic and beyond. Being 'vocal about local' can help even the smallest communities make an impact. Developing standard operating procedures that can be scaled and localized is essential from the highest to local levels.

Moving past fear-based motivation

As the fear factor from COVID-19 recedes, long-term, sustainable, system-wide solutions to promote clean public spaces, running water, and soap, will require large-scale behavior change, education, and investment on local and national levels. We must not lose this opportunity and momentum now to build better infrastructure and cultural changes promoting hygiene in the home and public spaces.

Looking at supply and demand

COVID-19 has created a rise in demand for hand hygiene, but we must meet that demand with the right supply of soap, water and handwashing stations especially in the effort to close gaps in large-scale social inequalities.

[WATCH THE RECORDING: YOUTUBE.COM/UNICEFINNOCENTI](https://www.youtube.com/unicefinnocenti) 



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40% of the world's population still do not have a place to wash their hands.

In least-developed countries, ¾ of people lack basic handwashing facilities at home.

2/3 of females but only 1/3 of males wash their hands after using the toilet. Data shows that younger men tend to be bigger risk takers who are taught not to fear germs, whereas women tend to have been socialized as caretakers with a duty of keeping the family healthy. Promoting education on hygiene and supporting behavioral and social change can improve this.

Hand hygiene is a human rights issue but also an issue of how we handle waste. We need solutions for not only hygiene but for sanitation and the environment.

Children have the potential to play a huge role in promoting handwashing and hygiene on a family and community level.

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