



water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Handwashing crucial for a healthy nation

12 October 2017

On 15 October, South Africans led by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) will join the globe in celebrating Global Handwashing Day to highlight the importance of washing hands for a healthy nation and universe. Global Handwashing Day is an annual global campaign aimed at raising awareness on the importance of washing hands as a way of reducing and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

This year, the awareness campaign is celebrated under the theme ***“Our Hands, Our Future”*** to encourage the public to wash hands at critical times to prevent the spread of infectious diseases for a brighter future. The theme also reminds us that handwashing protects our own health, but also allows us to build our own future, as well as those of our communities and the world.

Hands are the most common highways to the transmissions and spread of bacteria and viruses that cause diseases, food-borne illness, diarrhoeal infections resulting in people being hospitalised for treatment and at worst death. Hands are the most common way of transporting and spreading germs.

Handwashing with soap provides real benefits for the public as well as the government as it prevents the spread of germs and diseases and saves households in relation to costs of medical treatment and also leads to the reduction of costs to the public health system associated with the treatment of preventable illnesses such as diarrhea. Hygiene education and the promotion of handwashing are simple, cost effective measures that can reduce the spread of diseases and diarrhea cases.



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Let us all make handwashing a habit and wash our hands after visiting the toilet, after handling or changing baby nappies, before handling food and before and after eating or feeding a child. Basically, let us wash our hands after each and every activity to prevent the spread of germs and diseases.

**END**

**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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