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Of course, the hands are used several times throughout our day in various activities. Although the hands may look clean, they can contain many microorganisms and it is important to consider that some of these microorganisms can transmit disease. Moreover, it is relevant to note that the microorganisms that are in the hands can be transferred from one object to another or to other individual. In addition, the hands can also transfer these microorganisms to the interior of body due to the contact of the hands mainly with the mouth, nose and eyes. Naturally, these approaches are not recent, according to scientific data, since the mid of the eighteenth century, hand washing is considered an essential task before all medical procedures. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, hand washing was accepted as a global and desirable procedure.¹⁻⁴ Currently, hand washing is a desirable and crucial procedure for controlling infectious diseases, including COVID-19.⁵

Clean Your Hands is a global campaign promoted by the World Health Organization. It was launched in 2009 and it is celebrated annually on May, 5th (World Hand Hygiene Day). The aim is to maintain global promotion, visibility, transparency, and sustainability of hand hygiene in health care and to 'bring people together' in support of hand hygiene improvement around the world. The World Day of Hand Hygiene mobilizes people all over the world with the purpose of alerting about the danger of unclean hands in the transmission of diseases and also, increasing people's adherence to perform hand hygiene periodically throughout the day.⁶

In general, hand hygiene already occurs automatically in health services, before and after a procedure,

thus protecting both patients and health professionals against infections. However, hand hygiene should be a routine for the entire population, regardless of the situation in which they live.²⁻⁵

Hand hygiene with soap and water or 70% alcohol has proven to be effective in preventing and controlling infections. It is one of the most effective actions to reduce the transmission of microorganisms that cause infectious diseases, including COVID-19. Regarding this specific disease, it is a well-known fact that the transmission of the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) occurs through droplets of saliva expelled by the person with the disease, which are not always perceived visually, but which can be deposited on hands, objects and other surfaces, such as tables. Thus, hand hygiene is a strong ally to contain the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.⁵

Thus, both health professionals and the community, through a simple measure such as hand hygiene, can play an important role in preventing these infections. Despite the habit of hand hygiene is not new, inserting this habit into the daily routine is still a challenge. Although the benefits of frequent hand hygiene are known, in the daily routine, in many moments, this habit is neglected. Therefore, everybody must be vigilant so that this practice is constant.

So, do your part, periodically clean your hands with soap and water or 70% alcohol. It is important to alert people close to you of this simple but effective habit of fighting infections that are potentially capable of being transmitted by the hands as well. Also warn, so that the person avoids putting his hands on his mouth, nose and eyes. Not only to protect against COVID-19, but also the flu and other transmissible diseases.

Mario Bernardo-Filho

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