

Hygiene is a difficult subject. There are different ideas about what is good hygiene. Some people are painstakingly neat and don't seem to sweat no matter how hot it gets. And then, there are others who have to constantly shower and change clothes because that is just the way their body works. Some struggle with good hygiene because of depression or lack of motivation. And there are still others who have never been taught any differently or just don't care. No matter the situation, there are good reasons to have good hygiene.

## Four Important Reasons to Have Good Hygiene

**Most employers require it.** Not doing basic hygiene tasks can cause you to lose a job or miss out on a promotion. If you work closely alongside others or around customers, poor hygiene may even be considered offensive or unsanitary. Employers may also think it shows poor habits, poor judgment, and poor follow-through. While this isn't a fair judgement, it is still something that will hurt your opportunities to both get and advance in a job.

**Society expects it.** Not bathing, washing hands, or brushing teeth can create an opportunity for diseases and illnesses to be spread. If you are concerned about this, you may want to ask a trusted good friend or family member. It will be embarrassing, but it is better to know the truth and do something about it, so no one thinks that in the future.

**Your health relies on it.** Bathing helps your body shed bacteria and dead skin cells that cause body odor, skin problems, and other health-related illnesses. Washing your hands helps you wash away bacteria and viruses that can make you and others sick. Brushing your teeth helps eliminate bacteria that can cause tooth decay and gum disease.

**Your children learn from you.** Good hygiene is a good habit that you can teach them by example. Moms want their children to be healthy and happy. Hygiene is a big part of making that come true for your family. You will be teaching them important life skills when you practice good personal and oral hygiene.

## How to Improve Hygiene

**Bathing and hair washing.** Bathing and washing your hair will keep you clean, and it will make you feel good too. If you don't have access to a shower, then try using baby wipes but make sure to scrub everywhere on your body.

**Brushing your teeth.** Brush your teeth at least twice a day; once in the morning after breakfast and again before bed. Flossing is also something you should do everyday.

**Washing your hands.** Hand-washing reduces the chances of disease. Wash your hands after going to the bathroom, after coughing or sneezing into them, or after wiping or blowing your nose. Also wash them before preparing or eating food or after handling meat. If you do not have access to soap and water use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

**Cleaning your clothes.** Dirty clothes can cause your skin to itch or cause rashes or infection. It's important to launder dirty clothes using a laundry detergent. If you don't have a washer and dryer, then go to a laundromat or wash them by hand in clean water and rinse the detergent out really well. It is especially important to wear clean underwear to prevent infections and to prevent odor. Clothes can be hung to dry in the sun, if you don't have a dryer.

## Reasons for Poor Hygiene and What to Do

Sometimes life deals us a tough blow, and we stop caring about many things, including hygiene. If you are facing trauma, abuse, depression, or addiction, then consider getting some help now to heal from it. See your medical provider for a referral. Your life is valuable, and you are worth it.

If you don't have access to a shower or place to launder your clothes, there are often shelters that can help with your need. You can search online for local shelters at [HomelessShelterDirectory.org](http://HomelessShelterDirectory.org). Your local shelter may be able to help you even if you have a place to stay but need access to showers and washers.

If you didn't learn these skills as a child, then try to apply what you learned and see how it changes your life. We think you will find that good hygiene will be a boost to your physical, occupational, and mental health.

### Resources include:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Body, Facial, and Dental Hygiene. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/body/index.html>, accessed 7/16/2019.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hygiene-related Diseases. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/disease/index.html>, accessed 7/16/2019.
3. Dr. Williams, G. Pediatrician – Interview.
4. Li X, Kolltveit KM, Tronstad L, Olsen I. Systemic diseases caused by oral infection. *Clinical microbiology reviews*. 2000 Oct 1;13(4):547-58.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>, accessed 7/16/2019.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Trachoma. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/disease/trachoma.html>, accessed 7/16/2019.
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pinworms. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/disease/pinworms.html>, accessed 7/16/2019.
8. American Academy of Dermatology Association. How Skin Grows. Found at <https://www.aad.org/public/kids/skin/how-skin-grows>, accessed 7/16/2019.
9. Charles J. Weschler. Characterization techniques applied to indoor dust. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 1978; 12 (8): 923 DOI: 10.1021/es60144a011
10. Australian Government Department of Health. Personal Hygiene. Found at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch3~ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch3.7>, accessed 7/16/2019.