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Why Soap Works

At the molecular level, soap breaks things apart. At the level of society, it helps hold everything together.

Washing with soap and water is one of the key public health practices that can significantly slow the rate of a pandemic and limit the number of infections.

It probably began with an accident thousands of years ago. According to one legend, rain washed the fat and ash from frequent animal sacrifices into a nearby river, where they formed

a lather with a remarkable ability to clean skin and clothes. Perhaps the inspiration had a vegetal origin in the frothy solutions produced by boiling or mashing certain plants. However it happened, the ancient discovery of soap altered human history. Although our ancestors could not have foreseen it, soap would ultimately become one of our most effective defenses against invisible pathogens.

People typically think of soap as gentle and soothing, but from the perspective of microorganisms, it is

often extremely destructive. A drop of ordinary soap diluted in water is sufficient to rupture and kill many types of bacteria and viruses, including the new coronavirus that is currently circling the globe. The secret to soap's impressive might is its hybrid structure.

Soap is made of pin-shaped molecules, each of which has a hydrophilic head — it readily bonds with water — and a hydrophobic tail, which shuns water and prefers to link up with oils and fats. These molecules, when suspended in water, alternately float about as solitary units, interact with other molecules in the solution and assemble themselves into little bubbles called micelles, with heads pointing outward and tails tucked inside.

Some bacteria and viruses have lipid membranes that resemble double-layered micelles with two bands of hydrophobic tails sandwiched between two rings of hydrophilic heads. These membranes are studded with important proteins that allow viruses to infect cells and perform vital tasks that keep bacteria alive. Pathogens wrapped in lipid membranes include coronaviruses, H.I.V., the viruses that cause hepatitis B and C, herpes, Ebola, Zika, dengue, and numerous bacteria that attack the intestines and respiratory tract.

When you wash your hands with soap and water, you surround any microorganisms on your skin with soap molecules. The hydrophobic tails of the free-floating soap molecules attempt to evade water; in the process, they wedge themselves into the lipid envelopes of certain microbes and viruses, prying them apart.

“They act like crowbars and destabilize the whole system,” said Prof. Pall Thordarson, acting head of chemistry at the University of New South Wales. Essential proteins spill from the ruptured membranes into the surrounding water, killing the bacteria and rendering the viruses useless.

How Soap Works

Washing with soap and water is an effective way to destroy and dislodge many microbes, including the new coronavirus.

- **THE CORONAVIRUS** has a membrane of oily lipid molecules, which is studded with proteins that help the virus infect cells. **SOAP MOLECULES** have a hybrid structure, with a head that bonds to water and a tail that avoids it.
- **SOAP DESTROYS THE VIRUS** when the water-shunning tails of the soap molecules wedge themselves into the lipid membrane and pry it apart.
- **SOAP TRAPS DIRT** and fragments of the destroyed virus in tiny bubbles called micelles, which wash away in water.

In tandem, some soap molecules disrupt the chemical bonds that allow bacteria, viruses and grime to stick to surfaces, lifting them off the skin. Micelles can also form around particles of dirt and fragments of viruses and bacteria, suspending them in floating cages. When you rinse your hands, all the microorganisms that have been damaged, trapped and killed by soap molecules are washed away.

On the whole, hand sanitizers are not as reliable as soap. Sanitizers with at least 60 percent ethanol do act similarly, defeating bacteria and viruses by destabilizing their lipid membranes. But they cannot easily remove microorganisms from the skin. There are also viruses that do not depend on lipid membranes to infect cells, as well as bacteria that protect their delicate membranes with sturdy shields of protein and sugar. Examples include bacteria that can cause meningitis, pneumonia, diarrhea and skin infections, as well as the hepatitis A virus, poliovirus, rhinoviruses and adenoviruses (frequent causes of the common cold).

These more resilient microbes are generally less susceptible to the chemical onslaught of ethanol and soap.

But vigorous scrubbing with soap and water can still expunge these microbes from the skin, which is partly why hand-washing is more effective than sanitizer. Alcohol-based sanitizer is a good backup when soap and water are not accessible.

In an age of robotic surgery and gene therapy, it is all

the more wondrous that a bit of soap in water, an ancient and fundamentally unaltered recipe, remains one of our most valuable medical interventions. Throughout the course of a day, we pick up all sorts of viruses and microorganisms from the objects and people in the environment. When we absent-mindedly touch our eyes, nose and mouth — a habit, one study suggests, that recurs as often as every two and a half minutes — we offer potentially dangerous microbes a portal to our internal organs.

As a foundation of everyday hygiene, hand-washing was broadly adopted relatively recently. In the 1840s Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician, discovered that if doctors washed their hands, far fewer women died after childbirth. At the time, microbes were not widely recognized as vectors of disease, and many doctors ridiculed the notion that a lack of personal cleanliness could be responsible for their patients' deaths. Ostracized by his colleagues, Dr. Semmelweis was eventually committed to an asylum, where he was severely beaten by guards and died from infected wounds.

Florence Nightingale, the English nurse and statistician, also promoted



“Wash your hands like you’ve been chopping jalapeños and you need to change your contacts.”

hand-washing in the mid-1800s, but it was not until the 1980s that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued the world’s first nationally endorsed hand hygiene guidelines.

Washing with soap and water is one of the key public health practices that can significantly slow the rate of a pandemic and limit the number

of infections, preventing a disastrous overburdening of hospitals and clinics. But the technique works only if everyone washes their hands frequently and thoroughly: Work up a good lather, scrub your palms and the back of your hands, interlace your fingers, rub your fingertips against your palms, and twist a soapy fist around your thumbs.

Or as the Canadian health officer Bonnie Henry said recently, “Wash your hands like you’ve been chopping jalapeños and you need to change your contacts.” Even people who are relatively young and healthy should regularly wash their hands, especially during a pandemic, because they can spread the disease to those who are more vulnerable.

Soap is more than a personal protectant; when used properly, it becomes part of a communal safety net. At the molecular level, soap works by breaking things apart, but at the level of society, it helps hold everything together. Remember this the next time you have the impulse to bypass the sink: Other people’s lives are in your hands.

By Ferris Jabr-NY Times



Celebrating /Honoring a Life well lived during a pandemic—Limitations in funerals, limitless in love and memories

During an unprecedented time such as the Corona Virus Pandemic planning the funeral for a loved one has never been more grief stricken. The one event that has an endless guest list has now been reduced to 10 invitees only. Families are grieving twice in many cases. First, the loss of their loved one and secondly the inability to honor the life lost in the way that one planned or hoped.

The pandemic has added fears, speculations and uncertainties to the already highly emotional and deeply sensitive death experience. Families should be encouraged that even in this time of restrictions and limitations that their heart should be their guide. They have the opportunity now more than ever to focus on celebrating the limitless memories that they have and remember the endless love their loved one gave them.

“Funerals have been in our cul-

ture since the beginning of time “A meaningful funeral celebration is about saying hello on the pathway to goodbye. Ultimately, funerals help us embrace the wonder of life and death and remind us to live deeply, with joy and love.” –*Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt*

Our country has seen its fair share of tragic deaths as a result of national disasters, acts of war, mass shootings, and in weather related events but we have never been forced to experience the effects of the funeral events from a distance like we are with the 2020 pandemic. Death has always brought us together, never separated us.

No matter the cause of death, the pandemic has stripped away many of the comforting aspects of the healing process that Celebration of Life services, Memorial services and traditional religious funerals bring to grieving families. The mourners are not permitted to express the human touch in



pleasantries such as extended hugging, sitting closer together or even handshakes. Grieving relatives and friends are forced to sit alone in single chairs spaced 6ft apart in distance or solo on a pew or with only one other person. Repasts where mourners gather to share a meal have been canceled. The Jewish religious ritual of “sitting Shiva” has been eliminated or compromised. The traditional prayers at, before and after

burials at Mosques have been minimized or are non-existent. Nothing is quite the same.

If you are faced with planning a funeral of your loved one that has died from COVID-19, according to the CDC, at this time, there is no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of confirmed or suspected COVID-19; however, federal, state and local public health guidance may impact the size of gathering a family is able to plan. Depending on a family’s preferences, their loved one can be safely embalmed. Families may choose either burial or cremation as usual.

According to the National Funeral Directors Association embalming, viewings, dressing and casketing a loved one can still take place during this time. Funeral Planners and Funer-

al Directors are aware of the importance of a funeral and understand gathering for funerals, burials, and memorial services are being restricted but not eliminated.

Mission Park Funeral Chapels and Cemeteries in San Antonio, TX became the first to open a drive-in theater earlier this month this allows family and friends the chance to attend the funeral service from their vehicles, without breaking social distancing guidelines—*Luke Kenton, Daily Mail*

Together, with the family, funeral professionals are still in the business of honoring lives with limitless memories and endless love by creating meaningful funeral celebrations. Creativity, patience and focus on why funerals are important will make the difference. Funerals bring closure of the relationship and begin the grieving process. Without it, grieving can be unhealthily delayed.

This worldwide pandemic reminds us that family matters, friendships matter, and being together matters. Support, healing and honoring a life lost is critical. So embrace memories and show expressions of love.

In the event you would like to discuss funeral planning or need help navigating through the process, please call me at 571-867-0711 or email me at RPegeron@laytoorestservices.com

“One’s lifetime is made up of many events, a funeral is one event made up of one’s life.”—*Ruth Pegeron.*

*Written by Ruth Pegeron, Principle & Funeral Planning Consultant & Certified Celebrant, Lay to Rest Services, LLC
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Strength in Growth

James Cash Penney, founder of J.C. Penney once said, “Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together.” And the forces at Independent You are always working to create and bring together a team of staff that is able to provide the best care and knowledge in the senior care business. Under the direction of our Executive Director, Joanne S. McCarty, we are proud to announce the addition of Romina Black, RN and Vicky Nichols, RN to our Aging Life Care Professional staff.

Romina Black, RN, BSN

Romina began her nursing career as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), providing hands on care. She then went on to earn her Bachelor of Science Nursing degree from Western Governors University in Salt Lake

City, UT. Romina has over 14 years of nursing experience in a variety of settings. Following her studies, her career began working with the geriatric population in a subacute rehabilitation facility. She then transitioned to working as an emergency room nurse and has now spent the last two years of her career in Public Health Administration with Fairfax County. Her experience has provided her with skills to initiate appropriate interventions and protocols in a fast paced environment. Romina has been drawn back to the geriatric population and providing hands on care by providing care to her mother who has Alzheimer’s disease. She has joined the Aging Life Care Association and is working towards certification as a Certified Care Manager.

Romina has lived all over the



providing health care and improving patient outcomes. This led to her certification from Commission for Case Management (CCM) as a Case Manager and fueled her desire to support and advocate for families dealing with complex medical conditions. She received special recognition in her role as a Case Manager in 2016 with a Case in Point Platinum Award-Patient Advocate. Vicky is certified and has volunteered as a Guardian ad Litem dedicated to advocating for the best interests of abused, abandoned or neglected individuals. Her personal experience in caring for and supporting aging family members led to an interest in Geriatric Care

country with her husband who retired from the Navy's submarine service. She has two beautiful daughters and enjoys teaching them how to cook. Her family has recently rescued two dogs. She volunteers for a local animal rescue in Clifton, VA.

Vicky Nichols, RN, CCM

Vicky Nichols is a native of New England. She was born in Massachusetts where she spent her early childhood and then moved to upstate New York.

Vicky earned her nursing degree from LaBoure' College in Milton, MA. She spent the first half of her career in various adult critical care and emergency room settings. When she started a family, her focus moved to pediatric critical care and neonatal intensive care. In 2007, Vicky took a particular interest in resolving fragmentation in

Management and joining the team at Independent You. Vicky is a member in good standing with Aging Life Care Professionals.

Vicky has two grown sons. Her oldest is currently in nursing school, following Vicky's dedication to service. Vicky spends her spare time hiking and playing Frisbee with her border collie, Rosie. She also loves home renovations, gardening and music.

Under the guidance of Joanne McCarty, Independent You, Senior Services has made its mark in the senior care business as a provider of high quality, client focused Geriatric Care Management and home care services. If you or a loved one is in need of our services, please contact us at any time. When you need care, we're here.



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