

# Why Handwashing Matters to Schools

## Missed Days

- The recent outbreak of Shigellosis in Columbus causes an **average of 13 missed days** from school, work or childcare.
- Nearly **22 million school days** are lost annually due to the common cold.



## Germs Are Tough

- Certain strains of E. coli, salmonella, and other bacteria can **live on surfaces like cafeteria tables and doorknobs for up to two hours.**
- Rotavirus - a germ that causes gastrointestinal illness - can be transferred from a dry, smooth surface to a clean hand for as long as **20 minutes after the surface has been contaminated.**
- Shigella, a diarrhea spread illness, is **highly contagious** and takes on a few organisms to cause infection.



## Our #1 Defense

One study involving Detroit school children showed that **scheduled hand washing, at least four times a day, can reduce gastrointestinal illness** and related absences by more than 50%.



Sources:  
Columbus Public Health  
School Network for Absenteeism Prevention

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