How to Deliver an Effective Safety Talk on Handwashing – Training the Trainer



How do you deliver a safety talk on something so basic as hand washing without coming off looking like some kind of mother hen to your workers? Here are a few suggestions on how to present this vital infection control lesson in an effective way that will engage your workers.

Before the Safety Talk

The first step is preparation:

- Walk through workplace and make a list of all the specific infection hazards you identify in each area of the facility.
- Use the list to prepare your presentation by ensuring that it identifies each risk you identify.
- Check the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control websites to ensure your presentation includes the most up-to-date infection control information.
- Let trainees know that you'll be addressing infection control in advance so they can think about and prepare to express their concerns on the subject at the meeting.
- Post hand washing instructions and infection control posters at wash stations and in lavatories before the meeting to set the tone.
- Consider inviting a community healthcare nurse or other guest speaker to talk to your workers about infection control.

During the Safety Talk

- Involve trainees by inviting a worker to come forward and pretend to sneeze and cough to demonstrate sneeze and cough etiquette.
- Ask workers for their thoughts about flu, COVID, measles, or other infectious illnesses to gauge their level of concern and knowledge, and any misconceptions they may harbor.
- Demonstrate proper handwashing technique by placing glow-in-the dark powder on a doorknob in the training room.
- About halfway through the presentation, darken the room and go around with a portable UV lamp and see what's glowing, discussing hand cleanliness all the while.

- If your staff uses gloves, have them dip their gloved hands into a mixture of ketchup and shaving cream and then remove the gloves without getting any of the goo on them—then demonstrate the proper glove removal technique.
- Advise trainees to sing "Happy Birthday" to themselves while washing their hands to ensure they spend the proper amount of time in handwashing.
- Discuss your company's sick policies, vaccination, its effectiveness, safety, and availability in your community or through your company.

After the Safety Talk

Let workers know that proper and frequent handwashing is important to the company, too, and consider making waterless disinfectants and alcohol wipes available for frequent cleaning of hands, doorknobs, and shared keyboards and telephones.

Takeaway

The notion that adult workers need to be taught how to wash their hands may seem absurd, but it's the truth. So, make sure your training agenda includes infection control and the importance of proper handwashing in safeguarding against risks.