

## TOOLBOX TALK

# Personal Hygiene on Site

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Construction workers handle chemicals, contaminated soil, lead, silica, and biological hazards daily. Proper handwashing reduces diarrheal illness by 23-40% and respiratory illness by 16-21% (CDC). Poor hygiene transfers hazards from your hands to your mouth and home.

**40%**

Reduction in illness from handwashing (CDC)

**20 sec**

Minimum handwashing time with soap & water

**100%**

Good hygiene prevents illness on and off site

## 5 Rules for Personal Hygiene on Construction Sites

What's on your hands ends up in your body — keep clean to stay healthy:

**1**

### WASH HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER — EVERY TIME

Before eating, drinking, or smoking. After using the toilet. After handling chemicals, lead, or contaminated materials.

**2**

### NEVER EAT, DRINK, OR SMOKE IN WORK AREAS

Dust, chemicals, and contaminants settle on food and drinks. Use designated clean break areas only.

**3**

### CLEAN UP BEFORE YOU GO HOME

Shower or wash thoroughly after shifts involving lead, asbestos, silica, or chemicals. Don't take hazards home.

**4**

### KEEP WOUNDS COVERED AND CLEAN

Open cuts and scrapes are entry points for infection and chemical absorption. Clean, treat, and bandage immediately.

**5**

### USE CLEAN PPE AND WORK CLOTHES

Contaminated gloves, clothing, and gear transfer hazards to skin, food, and vehicles. Change and wash regularly.

## Daily Hygiene Checklist

- Are handwashing stations available with soap, water, and paper towels?
- Is there a designated clean break area away from work zones?
- Are first aid supplies available for treating cuts and wounds?
- Do workers handling lead/chemicals have separate clean changing areas?
- Is potable drinking water provided and accessible to all workers?

## When and How to Wash Your Hands Properly

### Before eating, drinking, or smoking

Contaminants on your hands transfer directly to food and into your body. Wash EVERY time, no exceptions.

### After using the toilet

OSHA requires toilet facilities and handwashing stations on all construction sites (29 CFR 1926.51).

### After handling chemicals or hazardous materials

Lead, solvents, fuels, adhesives, and cement can absorb through skin or be ingested. Wash immediately.

### After removing PPE (gloves, respirator)

The outside of your PPE is contaminated. Remove carefully and wash hands before touching your face.

### How: 20 seconds with soap and water

Wet hands, apply soap, scrub all surfaces including between fingers and under nails. Rinse and dry.

### Hand sanitizer is NOT enough for construction

Sanitizer doesn't remove grease, chemicals, lead dust, or heavy soil. Soap and water is required (OSHA).

## Common Hygiene Mistakes on Construction Sites

- ✗ Eating lunch without washing hands — you're eating whatever was on the materials you just handled
- ✗ Wiping hands on work clothes instead of washing — this spreads contaminants to your skin all day
- ✗ Taking contaminated work clothes home — lead and chemical dust on clothes exposes your family
- ✗ Using only hand sanitizer after handling chemicals — sanitizer doesn't remove lead, silica, or grease

## Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ 20-second rule: wash long enough to sing "Happy Birthday" twice — that's how long it takes to be effective
- ✓ OSHA requires employers to provide soap, water, and towels on construction sites — if they're missing, report it
- ✓ Keep a separate set of clothes for commuting home — never wear contaminated work gear in your car or house
- ✓ Hydrate with clean water from provided coolers — never drink from hoses, puddles, or unmarked containers

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Are our handwashing stations stocked with soap and paper towels right now?
2. Does everyone wash hands before eating, drinking, or leaving site?
3. Where is our designated clean break area — and are people using it?
4. Are workers who handle lead or chemicals showering before going home?
5. What can we do to improve hygiene habits on our crew?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes