

9. A Matter of Hygiene and Hand Washing

Hand washing facilities are vital if any hygienic value can be expected out of a toilet system. Hand washing is perhaps the most vital part of the process of improving personal hygiene. In fact hand washing is essential if an improved state of health is to be achieved in relation to toilet use. All eco-toilets (and any other toilet) should be fitted with a simple hand washing device as a matter of priority. There are many ways of making simple hand washing devices. The simplest is described below. The use of pot racks to hygienically dry out plates and pots is also useful. Cleanliness within the home is vital if the best health is to be gained. A simple but healthy diet also helps.

9.1 Simple hand washing devices

Hand washing devices can be made very simply and at almost no cost. Three simple types of hand washing device are described here. The first two originate in Malawi where they are used in both the CCAP and COMWASH ecosan programmes. Both use a plastic cup (Figure 9-1) or a tin/aluminium can (Figure 9-3) with two or three 3mm holes drilled or punched near the base. A nail could also be used to make the holes. In the first case the cup or can is suspended with string from either the toilet itself or from a simple wooden structure near the toilet. Plants can be grown below the hand washing device so that the used water is not wasted (Figure 9-2). Water is taken from a nearby basin or bucket with a cup or scoop and poured into the device just prior to washing. Water can also be held in a plastic bottle nearby and poured into the device (Figure 9-5). In the second case the tin can is attached to a length of wire and suspended from this wire. At the time of hand washing the tin can is held by the wire, dipped in a container of water, and then hung up again. The water drains out for hand washing (Figure 9-4). Even a single hole will provide enough water for hand washing (Figure 9-6). A bar of soap can also be suspended nearby. Hard soap is best since a hole can be drilled through the soap and suspended on a string near the hand washing device (Figure 9-7). These

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simple hand washers can be made in minutes, cost almost nothing and can cleanse the hands of dangerous bacteria after toilet use.



Figure 9-1: A simple plastic cup hand washing device



Figure 9-2: Used water falls on to plants below



Figure 9-3: A simple tin can hand washing device



Figure 9-4: Using the tin can hand washing device

The second type of simple hand washing device is made from a round plastic bottle with screw cap. Any size will do but the larger the bottle, the more hand washes can be made before refilling is necessary. A short length of 3mm steel wire is taken and a point filed down on one end. The used bottle is filled with water and a hole pierced near the bottom with the wire (Figure 9-8). It may help to wrap some cloth around the wire to hold it firmly. The wire is pushed through the plastic and withdrawn. When the cap is screwed up water will not come out of the hole (Figure 9-9). When the cap is unscrewed water will come out of the hole, sufficient for hand

washing (Figure 9-10). The device is hung up near the toilet. Put more in the bathroom, kitchen and eating areas. As with the first hand washing device, a bar of soap can also be suspended nearby.

Hand washers should be fitted to every toilet made. In fact several should be mounted around the homestead at convenient places. It should always be used prior to eating or handling food. Regular hand washing is vital if improvements to health in water and sanitation programmes are to be effective. It is remarkable that something so simple and cheap to make can be so valuable.



Figure 9-5: Adding water to the tin can



Figure 9-6: Tin can with a single hole



Figure 9-7: Tin can and a bar of soap



Figure 9-8: Piercing a hole in the plastic bottle



Figure 9-9: Putting-on the screw cap



Figure 9-10: Open screw cap for hand washing hand