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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH) RECOGNIZES  
NATIONAL HAND WASHING AWARENESS WEEK**

*-DOH and the Henry the Hand Foundation Help "Spread the Word, Not the Germs" -*

TALLAHASSEE- The Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the Henry the Hand Foundation celebrate National Hand Washing Awareness Week, December 3-9, 2006.

The first National Hand Washing Awareness Week started in 1999 in Cincinnati, Ohio due to the flu vaccine shortage. In collaboration with the Henry the Hand Foundation, the Greater Cincinnati Health Council Flu Vaccine Committee began educating the public on hand washing as the first line of defense against the flu or flu-like illness.

"Floridians must take proactive measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases through simple hand washing with soap and water," said Deputy State Health Officer Bonita Sorensen, M.D., M.B.A. "Reviewing and making use of these techniques will prepare and protect residents of Florida during the flu season."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hand washing is the single most important means in preventing the spread of infection. The CDC estimates that 36,000 people die from the flu or flu-like illness each year, 5,000 people die from food borne illness each year, and between 78,000 and 90,000 patients die each year from Hospital Acquired Infections (HAI), for which a direct link to many of these deaths is poor hand washing.

Furthermore, there are two million of 33 million hospital-admitted patients who contract HAIs annually. There are 76 million food borne illnesses each year resulting in more than 300,000 hospital admissions. Hand washing and hand awareness are important for nosocomial infection prevention, food safety, school health, personal health and disease prevention. 164 million days are lost from school due to illness, of which 22 million are due to the common cold alone.

To keep hands clean, DOH recommends hand washing:

- Before preparing or eating food
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- After going to the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up after a child who has gone to the bathroom

DOH promotes and protects the health and safety of all people in Florida through the delivery of quality public health services and the promotion of health care standards. For more information please visit [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us) or contact your local county health

department. For more information on National Hand Washing Week, please visit <http://www.henrythehand.com/pages/content/index.html>.

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