

# Features

## Personal Hygiene

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Why begin this year by writing about personal hygiene you ask? Surely everyone on a college campus would know how to care for their bodies and prevent odor right? Well that's what I had assumed. I'll tell you what changed by mind. Two young men were in the Health Center this summer discussing campus life, and they made some rather startling revelations. Among them was the necessity of talking to the young ladies about personal hygiene. I decided to take the suggestion to heart, however; the problem will be addressed as it pertains to members of both sexes.

Just what is personal hygiene anyway? Personal hygiene includes the regular routine things a person does to maintain a clean and healthy body: (1) Washing and grooming regularly, (2) Eating a balanced diet, and (3) Getting enough rest and exercise.

There are at least five consequences that poor personal hygiene can lead to: (1) Social rejection - You wonder why no one likes to visit your room? Having trouble keeping friends? Does your roommate keep the window open even when it is cool outside? (2) Poor self image - You begin to rationalize about your lack of social contacts. You think maybe you don't have the right clothes or your hair is not right or you're not pretty enough. (3) Vulnerability to disease and illness. (4) Loss of Teeth - Poor dental hygiene leads to swollen, bleeding gums. (5) Infections and parasitic conditions - Your body could become a breeding ground for crab lice and scabies (body lice). Poor handwashing habits (especially after using the bathroom) can predispose you to hepatitis.

Here are a few tips to aid you in doing away with the negative and accentuating the positive. Making the transition from poor hygiene to responsible or good hygiene involves the following:

**GOOD SKIN CARE:** Most people should bathe at least once daily. Whether or not you bathe more frequently depends upon the type of activities you participate in. Remember, when you sweat, your body is eliminating wastes through your skin. Lather well with soap. A gentle massaging motion loosens dirt and oil and stimulates circulation. Pay special attention to genitals and skin area with folds and creases - bacteria and dirt build up in these places. In the female, the cervix secretes a mucous to constantly cleanse itself. Normal secretions appear clear or whitish and produce no strong odor. Any discharge that produces an unpleasant odor may indicate a vaginal infection. You should see a physician as soon as possible. Frequent bathing is recommended during the menstrual cycle.

Rinsing well after bathing is a must to remove dirt and soap which can dry out the skin. Dry thoroughly to remove all moisture, especially in creases between toes, buttocks, etc. Improperly dried feet have been known to provide a perfect environment for the athlete's foot fungus.

Use a mild soap on your face, or use a facial cream. Deodorant soaps, very hot water and vigorous scrubbing can irritate the skin.

After bathing, you may use either a deodorant (it kills bacteria to stop odors) an antiperspirant (it blocks sweat glands to reduce wetness) or a combination of both. Sometimes, vaginal sprays or deodorants cause irritation and itching to the area.

Keep linens and underwear clean. Rinse face cloths thoroughly after use. Hang face cloths and towels to dry and change them often. Change sheets and pillow cases weekly. Underwear should be changed daily also. Cotton crotch underwear present an excellent foil for yeast infections.

If you use makeup, be advised that foundations, powders, etc., can clog pores. Don't share makeup and remember to remove it before going to bed.

A sponge bath is a good alternative if you can't bathe or shower. Some people shower at night and take a sponge bath the next morning. Be sure to thoroughly clean ears, armpits, genitals and anal area.

To prevent foot odor, bathe the feet daily and dry thoroughly. Change socks daily, and air out shoes. When all else fails, there are over the counter remedies which can be worn in the shoe.

Cut toenails straight across, even with the tip of the toe, never cut into corners. Another preventative measure against ingrown toenails is to avoid tight shoes or very high heels.

On the other hand, if you shave, whether its you underarms, legs or face, there are few things to remember. Wash the area thoroughly, then rinse. Apply shaving lather, cream or whatever special preparation you chose. Shave with a sharp razor blade, then rinse the area thoroughly.

According to the American College Health Association, the college aged population is at high risk for dental disease. Proper oral hygiene helps prevent bad breath, toothaches, gum disease and tooth loss. Bacteria in the mouth and in foods form plaque, a substance that sticks to teeth. Plaque can eat through tooth enamel and cause cavities. It can also collect at the gumline and harden into calculus, which causes the gums to recede. Teeth may eventually loosen and fall out. To retard plaque formation, brush teeth at least twice a day. Floss (clean under gums and between teeth daily as well). Dental floss may be purchased wherever tooth brushes are sold. For maximum protection, get together regular dental check-ups, don't wait until you have a problem.

Good nutrition is essential to your overall good health and looks. Make sure you eat foods from each of the basic four food groups which include: (a) The meat group which provides proteins, minerals, fats and B vitamins. (b) The fruit and vegetable group which provides vitamins A and C, minerals and fibers. (c) The bread and cereal group which provided carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals. (d) The milk group which provided calcium, proteins, vitamins A etc.

Drink at least 6 cups of liquids (preferably water) daily. This will help prevent constipation, and give you a clearer complexion.

Good hygiene helps prevent problems by: \*removing dirt and bacteria regularly, \*providing necessary nutrients for good health, \*keeping muscles and organs in top working condition.

There is an old adage "A word to the wise is sufficient." Hopefully that will be the case in this instance. There are so many other things to be concerned with as this school year begins, the problems associated with poor personal hygiene need not be added to the list.

*\*Some of the material in this article was supplied by the booklet: About Personal Hygiene cp 1983, Channing Bete Company.*

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## Health Forms Anyone?

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Frequently we are asked the question in the Health Center, "Why do I need to turn in a health form? I don't live on campus or I'm just taking a few classes. What the Health Center staff would like students to remember is that an accident or illness can happen at any time.

How important is your medical history form? It could serve as a life line between you and disaster.

The Report of Medical History gives the Health Center a base of operation while caring for your medical and some-

times psychological needs.

First of all, it gives a personal and family history which is priceless. Having frequent headaches? Is there a family history of hypertension? Chest pains? Does heart disease run in your family?

The personal history section gives us an overall picture of the condition of your health in the past. It also allows the physician who administered you physical examinations (hopefully your family physician) to review what you have submitted and make additional comments concerning your health problems.

Another important area is next of kin. Should your condition warrant it, Health Center personnel may have to contact a

relative in case of an emergency. It is preferable that the next of kin not live in the same household, which would give us two numbers to use instead of one when contacting family. For those students who are under the age of 18, we must have the signature of a parent or guardian before medical treatment can be rendered.

On the reverse or physical examination side of the form, room is allotted for the required immunization or shot record. This information is required by State Law. Failure to present an immunization record could result in your "disenrollment" from WSSU. New stipulations for this year demand that all students (regardless of age) must show 3 DTP shots and 1 booster. Those students whose record shows a need, will be required to keep their tetanus shots up to date.

The lower portion of the form is set for comments by your private physician concerning (1) impaired function of any body system (2) recommendations for physical activity and 3 recommendations regarding your care. Students with special problems e.g. sickle cell anemia, epilepsy, asthma, fainting episodes, diabetes, etc., should ensure that this section has been completed accurately.

Persons who are presently taking medications should include the name and dosage of the medication on the health form. It is vital that the Health Center be aware of any condition which could affect your matriculation through this university.

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