

**Message from**

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**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**on the occasion of**  
**WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY**

**Cairo, Egypt, 5 May 2023**

The theme for the World Hand Hygiene Day 2023 is “Together, we can accelerate progress on hand hygiene”. Washing our hands has always been one of the most simple and effective ways of preventing the spread of infection. Hand hygiene can save millions of lives each year, which makes it a highly cost-effective public health investment, providing outsized health benefits for relatively little cost.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical importance of hand hygiene, not only in health facilities but even more so in communities, and we must not forget the lessons we have learned. Hand hygiene is just as important as other health interventions in preventing endemic and epidemic diseases, and the spread of antimicrobial resistance. We need to ensure that those giving us care are practising proper hand hygiene and offering services in a clean and safe way.

There is a growing need to foster collaboration with professional groups and civil society in this year’s campaign so together we can build a culture of safety and quality in which infection prevention and control, including hand hygiene, is given highest priority.

There has been real progress in many countries in the Region in scaling up infection prevention and control measures, and with future disease outbreaks looming, we need to sustain this progress and pay even greater attention to hand hygiene. It is one of the most simple and cost-effective measures in stopping the emergence and spread of infectious diseases.

On the occasion of World Hand Hygiene Day 2023, WHO is calling on Member States and regional civil society organizations to be a part of this global movement and invest in infection prevention and control, including hand hygiene, at all levels of the health care system. Our continuing efforts will accelerate progress towards achieving universal health coverage and contribute to our regional vision of Health for All by All.