



Jefferson County



Public Health  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

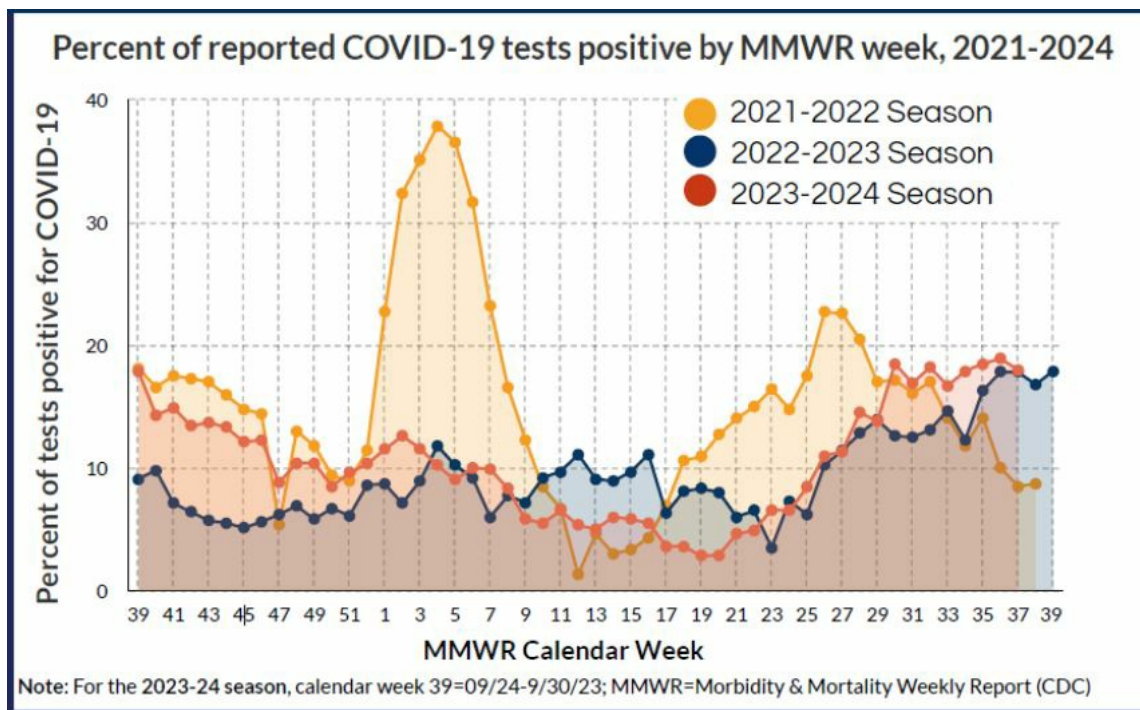
# Central Oregon Public Health Monthly Update

September 27, 2024

The Central Oregon Public Health Newsletter is now available in Spanish!  
To receive it in your mailbox click [here](#).

## Prepare for virus season this fall and winter

As we approach the start of flu season, which typically begins in October, respiratory illness indicators remain low in Central Oregon. Flu cases, along with data from wastewater surveillance, show minimal activity so far. However, COVID-19 continues to remain steady at a high level, with around 18% of tests coming back positive, and similar trends in wastewater monitoring.



With respiratory illnesses like flu, COVID-19, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) known to spread more rapidly in the fall and winter, Central Oregon Public Health Departments are urging residents to take steps to protect

themselves and others in the community.

## **How to Protect Yourself and Others**

“One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of these diseases and avoid severe illness is by staying up to date on vaccinations,” said Dr. Richard Fawcett, Central Oregon Health Officer. “Other good strategies include washing your hands frequently, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, avoiding crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, and staying home when you’re sick.”

## **2024-2025 Respiratory Season Guidance and Vaccination Information COVID-19**

In August, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the new monovalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for the 2024-2025 season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone aged six months and older receive the updated vaccine, including those who’ve been vaccinated before or who’ve had COVID-19. Vaccination remains the safest way to avoid serious illness, hospitalization, and long-term health impacts from COVID-19.

While Central Oregon Public Health Departments will not have free COVID-19 test kits available this season, residents can order four free at-home test kits from the federal government starting at the end of September by visiting [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov). These tests are effective for detecting current variants and can be used through the end of the year.

## **RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)**

The CDC recommends the RSV vaccine for infants under six months and older adults who are at greater risk for severe illness. Adults who are eligible for the RSV vaccine include pregnant women between 32 and 36 weeks, adults over 60 with chronic health conditions, and adults aged 75 and older. Monoclonal antibody treatment is also available for infants under 8 months and for children aged 8 to 19 months at higher risk for severe RSV disease.

## **Flu (Influenza)**

Flu shots are recommended for everyone aged six months and older and are widely available.

## **Accessing Vaccines in Central Oregon**

For most individuals, the quickest and easiest way to receive a vaccine is through local pharmacies or healthcare providers. Many pharmacies offer same-day appointments for flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines, and most health insurance plans cover the cost of these vaccines. You can also check with your healthcare provider to schedule a vaccination appointment.

For those who do not have access to health insurance or a regular healthcare provider, local public health will offer a limited number of vaccines. For more information reach out to your local public health department.

- **Deschutes County (541) 322 - 7400**
- **Jefferson County (541) 475 - 4456**
- **Crook County (541) 447 - 5165**

By staying on top of vaccinations and following preventive health measures, we can help protect ourselves and our community from the spread of respiratory illnesses this season.

## Family Connects of Central Oregon celebrates 3 years bringing comprehensive Postpartum care to Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties



Family Connects is a no-cost program available to families in Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties that offers nurse home visits to support families with newborns. Since its launch in October 2021, Deschutes County has completed over 500 visits, providing valuable assistance to new parents during a critical time. As one of the eight early adopters of the Family Connects program in Oregon, Deschutes is paving the way for nine additional counties to join by 2024-2025. Whether you're expecting or have recently welcomed a newborn, you can schedule a nurse visit either prenatally or around three weeks postpartum. These visits are designed to help parents get off to the right start. To learn more or sign up, visit [Family Connects Central Oregon](#).



### **Family Connects Central Oregon**

provides nurse home visits to families who are welcoming a new baby, including foster parents, adoptive parents and families who already have children.



- A visit is scheduled to assess mom and baby's health, answer questions you may have, and provide connection to resources.
- Visits are scheduled around 3 weeks after birth and are provided at **no cost** to families. They are a continuation of your medical care.
- All visits are made by highly-trained nurses.
- Helping all families regardless of income.

#### **Contact Us**

541-322-7475

[HSFamilyConnects@deschutes.org](mailto:HSFamilyConnects@deschutes.org)

[www.deschutes.org/health/page/family-connects-central-oregon](http://www.deschutes.org/health/page/family-connects-central-oregon)



## **Global Handwashing Day is on October 15th!**

Every year, on October 15, Global Handwashing Day reminds us how important it is to wash our hands with soap and water. Clean hands protect us from illness and germs, not just during public health emergencies like COVID-



19, but every day.

This year's theme is "Why are clean hands still important?" Central Oregon Health departments know clean hands help prevent infections, protect our community, and promote well-being. Handwashing is essential in hospitals, schools, and homes – everywhere!

**When Should You Wash Your Hands?** Washing your hands is one of the easiest ways to stay healthy. Key times to wash include:

- Before and after preparing or eating food
- After using the restroom or changing diapers
- After caring for someone sick
- After touching pets or garbage
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose



**How to Wash Your Hands Properly** Follow these steps to make sure you wash effectively:

1. Wet hands with clean water and apply soap.
2. Lather all parts of your hands, including between fingers and under nails.
3. Scrub for 20 seconds (hum "Happy Birthday" twice).
4. Rinse thoroughly.
5. Dry with a clean towel or air dry.

If soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60%

For more information, visit the CDC's handwashing resource page [here](#).



*Environmental Health staff promoted handwashing this summer at the Deschutes County fair and rodeo!*

# Mythbusters! Is Antibacterial Soap Better than Normal Soap?





This material was developed by CDC. The Life is Better with Clean Hands Campaign is made possible by a partnership between the CDC Foundation, GOJO, and Staples. HHS/CDC does not endorse commercial products, services, or companies.

Picture this: you're about to cook dinner for your family so you decide to wash your hands. You've just run your hands under warm water and reach for your 99.99% antibacterial liquid soap, because of course anti-bacterial is the safest and most effective soap to use. Or is it?

As it turns out, regular soap is equally as effective at removing dirt and germs as antibacterial soap. In fact, antibacterial soap may be detrimental to the

environment and human health. Many organizations in [microbiological](#), [food safety](#), and [health and medical](#) fields actually discourage the use of antibacterial soaps.

All soap is made the same way and is a combination of fat and alkaline substances. Traditionally, lye and lard were used as the alkali and fat components, respectively, but in modern times many more types of fats and alkalis have been used to create the magic that is soap.

And it is magic! When fat and alkalis are combined in a process called saponification, they transform into a substance that can lather and clean. Without this critical step, soap would not be able to effectively clean your skin (or anything else!)

Once saponified, soap takes on some amazing characteristics. The combination of fat and alkali creates a chemical structure where each molecule of soap has two ends: the polar head that is hydrophilic (attracted to water) and the nonpolar tail that is lipophilic (attracted to oil) and hydrophobic (repels water).

When you wash your hands, this is what happens at a microscopic level: individual soap molecules surround clumps of oil and dirt that have accumulated on your skin. The tails of the soap molecules are attracted to the oil and the heads of the soap molecules are oriented outwards, creating a microscopic bubble with the oil, dirt and germs trapped inside (see Figure 1 below). This bubble, called a micelle, can now be easily lifted up off your skin and washed away by water during handwashing.

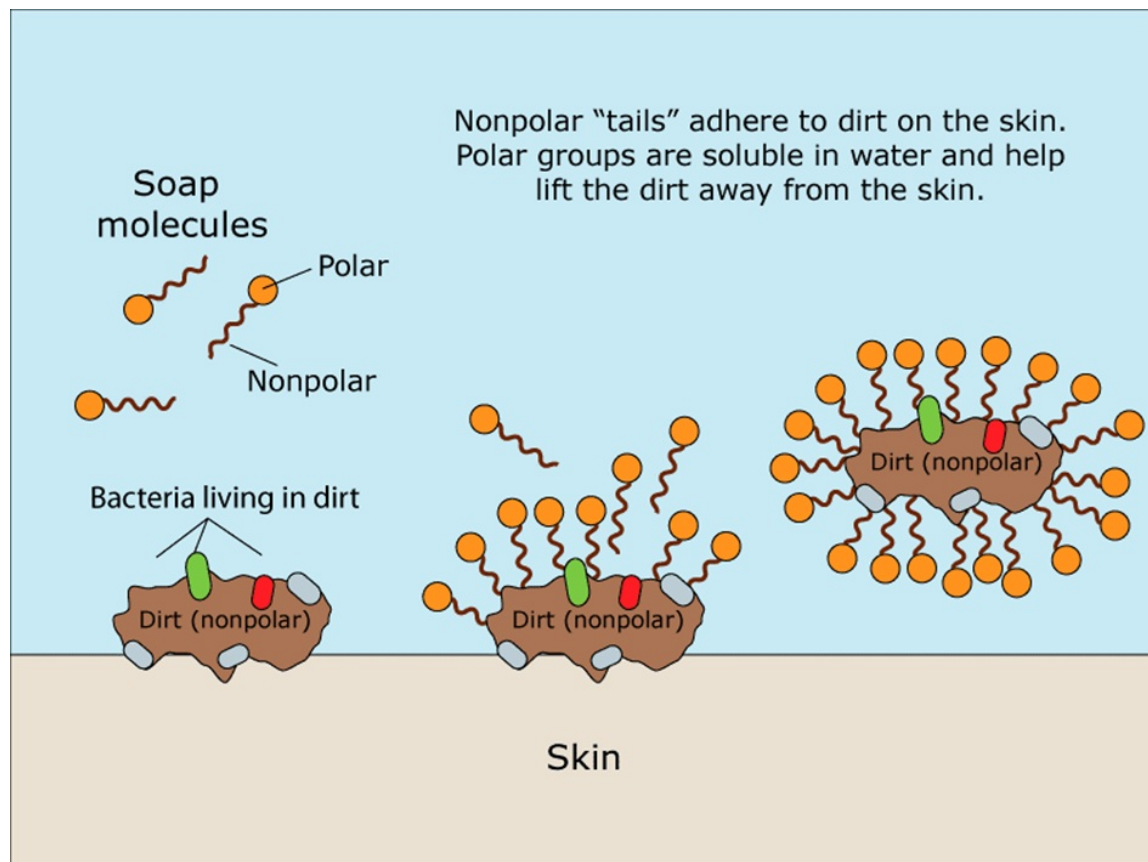


Figure 1: How Does Soap Actually Work? (image courtesy of DefeatDD.org)

All soap has this magic power, regardless of whether it is a liquid soap in a



pump, a hard bar of soap, or is labeled as 'antibacterial'. Plain old non-antibiotic soap does an amazing job of removing germs, dirt, and oils from skin without any of the additives that antibacterial soap contains. And what is Antibacterial soap, anyway?

Antibacterial soap starts out like regular soap but is then altered by adding chemicals that have bacteria-killing properties. These chemicals work similarly to the chemicals found in disinfecting house cleaners. While they are effective at killing *most* of the harmful germs on a surface, the problems arise from the 0.01% of bacteria that are not killed by the anti-bacterial additives.


After washing with antibacterial soap, the germs that weren't killed by the chemical disinfectant are washed down the drain along with the added chemicals. This can lead to antibacterial chemicals ending up in our rivers and streams, where they can harm natural waterways and plants. The bacteria can also develop antibiotic resistance, making our medicinal antibiotics less effective when people go to the doctor seeking treatment for infections.

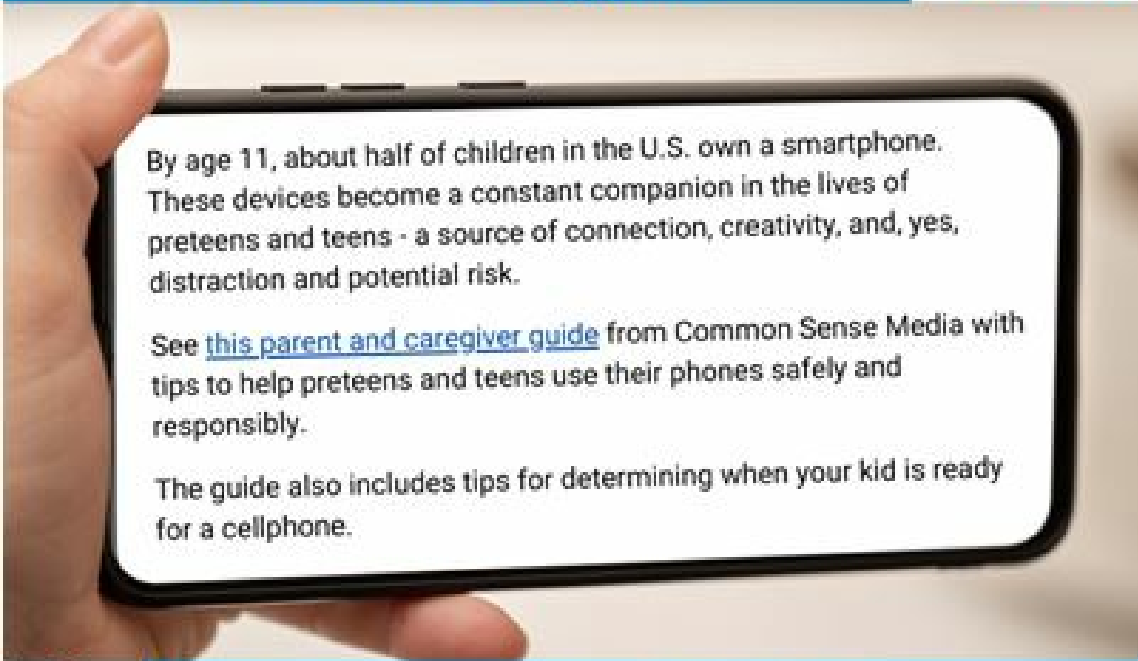
So, are antibacterial soaps the safest and most effective option we have to wash our hands? Absolutely not! Plain old-fashioned soap does wonders to clean our hands.

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## Cellphones - A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

### Cellphones and Devices: A guide for Parents and Caregivers






By age 11, about half of children in the U.S. own a smartphone. These devices become a constant companion in the lives of preteens and teens - a source of connection, creativity, and, yes, distraction and potential risk.

See [this parent and caregiver guide](#) from Common Sense Media with tips to help preteens and teens use their phones safely and responsibly.

The guide also includes tips for determining when your kid is ready for a cellphone.



Healthy Schools is a partnership between Bend-La Pine Schools and Deschutes County Health Services - connecting education, health, and community. [Click for more info.](#)

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The environment plays a major role in everyone's health and wellbeing – from having access to safe drinking water, safe food, clean air, and outdoor spaces to relax and play in. These factors are especially important for children. Kids' bodies continue to develop from birth to late teenage years, and the environment surrounding them can help or seriously harm that development. It's more vital now than ever to improve children's access to safe environments, and National Children's Environmental Health Day was created to bring awareness to this increasingly important topic.

This year, [Children's Environmental Health Day](#) is on October 10th, 2024. This day is an opportunity for organizations around the United States to showcase work being done to improve several aspects of children's environmental health, and to educate the public on what they can do to help reduce environmental threats to children. There are several efforts throughout Central Oregon to improve children's access to safe outdoor and indoor spaces, improve their nutrition, and protect the indoor air quality at daycares. One such organization is [NatureConnect](#), a group that provides safe outdoor experiences for children to strengthen their connection to nature and enhance access to the outdoors for children who otherwise might not have many opportunities to be outside. [Bend- La Pine Schools Nutrition Services](#) provides nutritionally balanced, scratch-made, free meals to children from kindergarten through high school. School kitchens are also inspected for safety by local county environmental health specialists to ensure food is being made and served to prevent illness.

Local environmental health (county health department) offers support to protect children in other ways, as well. County Environmental Health Specialists (EHS)

are required to inspect daycare facilities for environmental sanitation and safety each year. In Deschutes County, there are just over 100 childcares that EHS inspect annually. Crook and Jefferson County EHS inspect around 20 each year. These inspections review food handling and service procedures, illness policies for children and staff, diapering procedures, and playground safety.

This year, a new air quality program for children was funded by a grant from the Oregon State University Children's Environmental Health Center to improve knowledge and resources about indoor air quality in childcare homes. Deschutes County Public Health, in collaboration with Crook and Jefferson counties, used the funding to purchase 40 indoor air quality monitors, develop an indoor air quality toolkit for in-home childcare providers, and conduct assessments at participating childcare facilities. As of September 2024, 38 childcares are involved in the program, learning about air contaminants like wildfire smoke and how to enhance indoor air quality.

Children's environmental health is a rapidly growing and changing field. While there is still much to learn, and to improve upon, the efforts being made in Central Oregon are promising. Local organizations, and local environmental health, continue to make strides in advancing their understanding of environmental hazards, reducing public exposure to hazards, and bettering their programs to include resources and education for the public. To learn more about local environmental health and children's environmental health, visit the websites below!

[Crook County Environmental Health](#)  
[Deschutes County Environmental Health](#)  
[Jefferson County Environmental Health](#)  
[ASPIRE Children's Environmental Health Center](#)

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## October events:

### [10/2 La Pine Community Harvest & Resource Fair 4pm - 6pm](#)

We are heading to La Pine to talk to families and students about our mental health programs at this event coordinated by the Deschutes Public Library and Bend-La Pine School District.

### [10/3 OSU-Cascade Community Health and Wellness Resource Fair 1pm- 3pm](#)

On the OSU-Cascades campus, we will be offering students our FREE Build-Your-Own Mental Health Kits and vaping disposal services.

### [10/9 COVO Stand Down - Redmond 9am - 2pm](#)

At the Redmond VFW, we will be offering information on our behavioral health and crisis services for our veteran, homeless, and low-income population.

### [10/15 Food Safety and Sustainability Summit 10am - 2pm](#)

Deschutes County Health Services, the Central Oregon Community College Cascade Culinary Institute and partners invite the community to attend the inaugural Food Safety and Sustainability Summit in October.

### [10/18 - 10/19 Community Health Workforce Summit - COCC 9am - 4pm](#)



At COCC, we will connect with the Central Oregon traditional health worker community by providing information on our services and offering recruitment opportunities.

[10/26 Camp Fire Autumn Family Faire - Troy Field 11am - 3pm](#)

Camp Fire is hosting an opportunity for us to share our emergency preparedness services and youth programs to an estimate 300+ people in our community.

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Health Services hosts numerous classes and special events each month!

For details about these events and any updates please visit our [Health Services Calendar](#).

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### Public Health Resources:

- Central Oregon public health web resources:
  - [Crook County](#)
  - [Deschutes County](#)
  - [Jefferson County](#)

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