AGHAM AT KAALAMAN PARA SA BAYAN!

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

PAASE BULLETIN # 12

ON PAASE STRATEGIC ACTION GROUP 1: CONTAINMENT & MITIGATION

Addressed to: General public and LGUs; Media

COVID-19, HANDWASHING AND ALTERNATIVE HAND HYGIENE

Handwashing is one of the most important contributions to slowing down transmission of COVID-19 and keeping ourselves and our communities safe. The availability of safe water is essential to ensure handwashing, but this cannot be assured in many low- and middle-income settings including (but not limited to) urban poor areas in the Philippines. Less than ideal alternatives include 70% alcohol-based rubs and 0.05% chlorinated water. The WHO guidance on water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for the COVID-19 virus that addresses water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) risks and practices in health care settings provides the following hand hygiene practices:

1. Hand hygiene is extremely important. Cleaning hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub should be performed according to the instructions known as “My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene.” Although the 5 moments were designed for healthcare workers, they can apply to home health care settings as well.

2. Hand hygiene in non-health care settings should be practiced “in homes … and crowded public places – such as markets … and train or bus stations” – “before preparing food, before and after eating, after using the toilet or changing a child’s diaper, and after touching animals.”

3. When hands are visibly soiled, and safe water and soap are available, handwashing should be performed for 40-60 seconds according to WHO poster on How to Handwash.

4. When hands are not visibly soiled, hand rubbing with an alcohol-based product (such as 70% ethyl or isopropyl alcohol) should be performed for 20-30 seconds according to the WHO poster on How to Handrub.

5. If an alcohol-based hand rub or soap are not available, then chlorinated water (0.05%) is an option for handwashing although prepared dilutions might be inaccurate and frequent use may lead to dermatitis (which could increase the risk of infection) and asthma.

The importance of handwashing and hand hygiene cannot be overstressed during this COVID-19 pandemic. As many as 8 out of 10 children in China with negative SARS-CoV-2 nasopharyngeal tests revealed persistently positive rectal swabs (suggesting the possibility of fecal-oral transmission), concordant with recent findings of COVID-19 in sewage three weeks before the first case was reported in the Netherlands.
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References:


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