

PERSONAL HYGIENE: Schools must protect students

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WHILE most people get over a cold, the flu can be much more serious, especially now due to the Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. In schools, it is important that students are taught good hygiene.

The Malaysian Association of Standards Users conducted a mini survey among schoolchildren last year on food poisoning, toilet facilities and hand-washing habits.

The survey showed that 15 per cent of the students did not wash their hands before eating during recess and 41.7 per cent washed their hands only sometimes.

Students were asked if they washed their hands with soap after using the toilet and 36.6 per cent answered "yes". However, 36.8 per cent did not wash their hands after using the toilet, while 26.6 per cent did it only sometimes.

If we combine those who did not wash their hands and those who did it only sometimes, it amounts to 63.4 per cent. A significant number of students are exposing themselves to the risk of infections and food-related illnesses.

The students were also asked whether the school provided soap in the toilets and canteens. A total of 65.6 per cent said no soap was provided. And in cases where soap was provided, it was dish-washing soap. Another 14.7 per cent said soap was available only sometimes.

The survey also showed that 96.4 per cent of students wanted their schools to provide proper hand-washing facilities and soap.

Washing hands with water alone will not kill germs. Some schools provide detergent or dishwashing liquid in a container. This, too, is not right. There should be liquid hand wash in pump bottles.

A total of 33.3 per cent of the students said food served in the canteen was not healthy, most of it being fast food. They also complained that the food was not tasty and expensive.

We urge the Health and Education ministries to look into this matter seriously. Providing soap and well-balanced food should be made compulsory in every school.

Extract from Newspaper Article, New Straits Times.