

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

Healthy Holidays Start with Clean Hands

The holidays are coming. Do you have time to be sick in bed? Are you worried about catching the flu, whether it's the avian flu that might get here some day, or just a usual run-of-the-mill flu, or just the common cold, what are you doing about it now? If you haven't gotten yourself to the doctor for a flu shot, get moving! That's one short, sweet practical action you can take. But the most important things to do are everyday events - **wash your hands!** Every day, several times a day, wash your hands.

The majority of cold and flu germs, whether they are viruses or bacteria, get into us by way of our hands. Will you be doing Christmas shopping the day after Thanksgiving, or are you just out doing regular shopping? Look at all the other people around you, and consider how many of them might be carrying germs.

Whether you have to work with someone who's coughing and sneezing all ready, or if you're shopping in the mall, chances are the cold germs are there. Use tissues for the cough or sneeze, or cough into your shoulder rather than your hand. Wash your hands as often as you can, so that you're not passing the bugs on to someone else. Wash your hands after you've been in contact with someone who is coughing or sneezing. Don't rub your eyes or nose until your wash. Don't put a pencil or paperclips into your mouth.

When you stop in the rest room, do not leave until you have washed your hands. If possible, use warm water. Lather up with soap. Scrub between your fingers and on the back of your hands too. Rinse off, then dry with paper towels. Use the towel to turn

off the water. If you turn it off with your bare hands you just recontaminated your fingers from the dirty handle. Then, use that paper towel, or a fresh one, to pull open the door. Otherwise you contaminated yourself again from the dirty door handle.

If you are snacking while you shop, wash those hands again before you touch the food. How many sweaters did you handle? How many doors did you open? How many dollar bills or credit cards did you touch? All of those can carry germs to your hands. Don't let them get onto the food going into your mouth.

If you are grocery shopping, do not sample the grapes in the produce section. There are too many people, with too much dust on their shoes and clothes, going past those grapes. The grapes and your fingers need to be washed before they go into your mouth.

If you get back from shopping just in time to put pizza on the table for the kids, make sure their hands get washed along with yours. If dinner is pizza after the kids' game and you know there's no soap and water at the field, carry moist towels for dirty fingers. You can keep some in your purse, in the glove compartment of the car, in your shopping bag, in your jacket pocket. That way you'll always have some protection.

The towels are not as good as soap and water, but they are better than letting someone else's cold into your house. There's no need to insist on anti-bacterial soaps. They do no more good than regular soap and warm water. In fact, too much use of anti-bacterial soaps may make the bacteria stronger. A good scrub, at least 20 seconds, with warm water and soap, is your best protection against the colds and flu now and all year long. Make good hand hygiene a habit, so that you have one less thing to worry about come holiday season!

This week's recipe is a quick way to sweeten up some acorn squash. They're in

the markets now, in the usual green as well as new striped and golden varieties. Try some soon! Each squash serves 2 people, so adjust the recipe for as many as you need.

### Fruity Baked Squash

2 medium acorn squash	1 apple, sliced
1 peach, sliced	1/4 C honey
2 Tbsp water	1/4 tsp ground nutmeg or cinnamon
1 Tbsp margarine or butter	

Cut squash in half lengthwise and scrape out seeds and strings. Put cut side down in baking dish and microwave on high for 12 to 15 minutes, or until they are tender enough to stick a fork into them. Turn several times during cooking.

While they cook, mix fruit, honey, water and spice in small bowl. When squash are tender turn cut side up. Divide the fruit mixture into the 4 halves. Dot margarine over fruit. Cover with waxed paper and microwave 5-6 minutes until fruit is hot and soft.

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