

## LETTER TO EDITORS

# 'WASH YOUR HAND!': THE OLD MESSAGE FROM FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE TO BATTLE COVID-19

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It is undeniable that coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has become a new global problem today. Its outbreak started in Wuhan China in late 2019 and by March 2020 it has spread around the world. We still keep counting the confirmed cases, deaths, and recoveries in all affected countries. COVID-19 - 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease - is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) with several symptoms including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, as well as pneumonia in severe cases ([Unicef, 2020](https://www.unicef.org/2020/03/20/covid-19-what-parents-should-know)). The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing), and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus. The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectant can kill it.

In response to the today's situation, many people are busy and may be panic to buy face masks, soaps, alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash their hands in order to prevent the virus. However, if we would just remember the same old message from Florence Nightingale "wash your hand", it will be fine. Florence Nightingale, The Lady with the Lamp, is the nursing pioneer who told use to wash hands. If she was here today, she would be quite disappointed over lack of hand hygiene around the globe. In her career, she focuses on infection control, good hygiene, clean water, clean sheets, fresh air exercise, good food, and all factors to place us in the best position.

As I am a nursing lecturer in one of universities in Thailand. I always act like Florence Nightingale and bring her principles to all nursing students,

and I ask them to spread and apply the information to the world. Like she said, "Every nurse ought to be careful to wash her hands very frequently during the day. If her face too, so much the better" ([Nightingale, 1860, p. 53](https://www.nightingale.org.uk/1860)). It is understandable that breaking the habit is difficult, but it does not mean it is too late to change. Many people may understand the benefits of hand washing, but they are too lazy. Some also know about hand washing, but they may not clearly understand, or they do not have good facilities. Therefore, this letter is however to invite all nurses, specifically in Thailand, to remember what Florence told us, specifically to emphasize the importance of hand washing for themselves and the people around them. Showing them how to do correct-hand hygiene and prevent infection. Washing our hands often, especially before eating; after blowing our nose, coughing, or sneezing; and going to the bathroom. We should find the ways to change and enforce preventive behaviors based on the recommendations from World Health Organization. In addition, all nursing organizations and institutions also should keep promoting good hygiene to the community in the public arena. Hopefully we can combat the virus together.

### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest to be declared.

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