



Cultural Phenomena

Hygiene (18)

14:45 minutes

Two-track audio

00:00 Switzerland is a hygienic country. Toilets and sewage plants are part of everyday life. In a hospital, hygiene is especially important.

A young woman in the Kantonsspital Winterthur tells us what hygiene in the hospital means to her. The personnel have to disinfect their hands regularly.

02:28 In the 19th century, the importance of hygiene in medicine was still unrecognised. Many women died after giving birth because doctors had dirty hands. At this time, viruses and bacteria were discovered.

03:15 Today, the hygiene rules in hospitals are very strict. A consultant for hospital hygiene is explaining why – despite all the hygienic measures – gastric infections sometimes occur.

06:20 On the toilet: Coli bacteria live in faeces which support the digestive process, but in drinking water lead to diarrhoea. That is why sewage plants are important. But they are expensive. This is the reason why plagues such as typhus or cholera have only been conquered in rich Western societies.

06:51 In poorer countries, though, there are no sewage plants, people fall ill after drinking polluted water. A river in Bangladesh: People relieve themselves in the water, drink from it. Education and sewage systems are not available.

07:25 Hospitals invest in new technologies. In the kitchen at the hospital, too, the rules are strict: disinfect the hands, wear gloves, no contact of chicken with fruit etc. A sample of each meal is kept in the cold store for a whole week so that it could be checked and examined in an emergency.

10:22 The way to today's level of hygiene was long: Health is expensive. The new sterilisation unit in the Kantonsspital Winterthur cost eight million francs. It washes the surgical instruments at 94 degrees before they are sterilised at 134 degrees.

12:41 Absolute hygiene round the clock: in private life, too.