

The Tippy Tap Project

The tippy tap is a simple device for washing hands with soap and running water. It is made from found or recycled materials and takes little water (only about 40 ml per use). The design is hands-free except for the soap, reducing the chance of transferring bacteria between users.



1. Dig holes and insert two forked (Y-shape) branches into the ground, spaced so they can cradle a long horizontal stick. Pack the dirt firmly around the uprights.
2. With a heated nail, make three holes close to the cap of a plastic jug, or jerry can.
3. Slide the long stick through the jug handle, and place the stick in the Y of the upright branches.
4. Tie one end of a durable length of string around the neck of the jug. Connect the other end of the string to a short stick or piece of wood so that the wood just touches the ground (this will function as the foot lever).
5. Poke a hole through the center of a bar of soap and thread string through the hole to hang the soap from the crosspiece.
6. Step on the lever and adjust the length of the string as necessary so that the jug tips over and back smoothly.

Medical students from Drexel University College of Medicine have introduced the tippy tap in villages in Cameroon during summer service trips there. To learn more about their work, visit www.ducombushmedicine.com.

This article is a supplement to "Global Health – Give and Learn," published in the October/November 2012 issue of Pulse (Vol. 1, No. 2), the newsletter of Drexel University College of Medicine.