

Hand Hygiene

When to Wash Hands

To prevent the spread of infection, signs should be posted at each sink indicating when and how staff, volunteers, and children should wash their hands.

Hand washing should occur

- When arriving for the day or when moving from one group of children to another
- Before and after
 - ~ Eating, handling food, or feeding a child; especially important for children who eat with their hands to decrease the amount of saliva (which may contain organisms) on their hands
 - ~ Administering a medication
 - ~ Playing with water that is used by more than one person
- After
 - ~ Diapering and toileting
 - ~ Handling body fluids (eg, mucus, blood, vomit)
 - ~ Wiping noses, mouths, and sores
 - ~ Handling uncooked food (especially raw meat and poultry)
 - ~ Handling pets and other animals (including tropical fish) or cleaning their cages or litter boxes
 - ~ Playing in sandboxes (to prevent the ingestion of parasites that could be present in contaminated sand and soil)
 - ~ Cleaning
 - ~ Handling garbage
- When leaving for the day

How to Wash Hands

Children and staff should wash hands using the following method:

- Make sure a clean, disposable paper (or single-use) towel is available.
- Turn on water (no less than 60°F [15.6°C] and no more than 120°F [48.9°C]).
- Moisten hands with water and apply liquid soap to hands.
- Rub hands together vigorously until soapy lather appears, and continue for at least 10 seconds; rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails and jewelry, and on back of hands.
- Rinse hands under running water until free of soap and dirt. Leave water running while drying hands.

- Dry hands with a clean, disposable paper towel or single-use cloth towel.
- If taps do not turn off automatically, turn taps off with a disposable paper towel or single-use cloth towel.
 - ~ Shared towels can transmit infectious diseases.
- To dispose of towels
 - ~ Throw disposable towel in lined trash container.
 - ~ Place single-use cloth towel in laundry hamper.
 - ~ Hang individually labeled cloth towels to dry.
- If desired, use hand lotion from a liquid lotion dispenser to prevent chapping.

Use a source of clean, running water. Running water will initially rinse off some soil, provide moisture for a good lather, and rinse the skin thoroughly to leave the skin clean.

Children and staff should use liquid soap because

- Although adequately drained bar soap has not been shown to transmit bacteria, bar soaps sitting in water have been shown to be heavily contaminated with *Pseudomonas* and other bacteria.
- Many children do not have the dexterity to handle a bar of soap, and many adults do not take the time to rinse the soil off before putting down the bar of soap.

Additional information

- Premoistened cleansing towelettes
 - ~ Do not effectively clean hands and may spread pathogens from one hand to another.
 - ~ May be used when running water is not available (eg, during an outing).
 - ~ May be used while in the middle of diapering. After removing the soiled diaper and before putting on a clean diaper, the caregiver's/teacher's hands (and often the child's hands, too) may come in contact with feces or urine by touching the soiled skin in the diaper area. Stepping away from the diaper table to wash hands at a sink at this point is not practical. Using a wipe to reduce the level of soil on the caregiver's/teacher's and child's hands at this point is a reasonable compromise.
- Antibacterial soaps may be used, but are neither required nor recommended.

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Hand Hygiene, continued

Assisting Children With Hand Washing

Encouraging and teaching children good hand-washing practices must be done in a safe manner. Washing infants' hands helps reduce the spread of infection. Washing under running water is best. Staff should wash their own hands after assisting children with hand washing.

Caregivers/teachers should provide assistance

- At a sink for infants who can be safely cradled in one arm
- For children who can stand, but not wash their hands by themselves

For the child who is unable to stand and too heavy to hold at the sink to wash hands under running water, the following method should be used:

- Wipe the child's hands with a damp paper towel moistened with a drop of liquid soap, and discard towel.
- Wipe the child's hands with a clean, wet paper towel until hands are free of soap, and discard towel.
- Dry the child's hands with a clean paper towel.

Using Alcohol-based Hand Rubs

The use of alcohol-based hand-rub products (eg, liquid, gel, or foam hand sanitizers) does not substitute for hand washing in the group care setting. Hand washing is required to remove visible soil. Alcohol-based hand rubs should be limited to instances in which no sink is available. These products require an alcohol content of 60% or greater to be effective at killing germs. They are highly toxic if ingested by children, and they are flammable.

Caregivers/teachers should do the following:

- Limit the use of alcohol-based hand rubs to areas of the facility that are inaccessible to children (eg, in a kitchen that is off-limits to children or the maintenance equipment area).
- Discourage alcohol-based hand rubs for hand hygiene in child-use areas. If they are used in these areas because of lack of sinks, ensure that no child can have independent use of the container or dispenser.
- Be sure that hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand rubs conforms to the manufacturer's instructions. The procedure for using alcohol-based rubs should include the following:
 - ~ Apply the required volume of the product to the palm of one hand and rub together; cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers until the hands are dry. The required volume should keep the hand surfaces wet for at least 15 seconds or longer if indicated by the manufacturer.
 - ~ Check the dispenser systems for hand-hygiene rubs on a regular schedule to be sure they deliver the required volume of the product and do not become clogged or malfunction in some other way.
 - ~ Store supplies of alcohol-based hand rubs in cabinets or areas approved for flammable materials.
 - ~ Monitor hand hygiene with unannounced and regular direct observation. When hand rubs are used, check how much of the product is being used to be sure the appropriate amount gets used as a way to verify that the staff who are authorized to use this method of hand hygiene are continuing to use the material properly.