

## Let's Wash Our Hands

Playing in mud, having tea parties, and singing at large group time is fun and exciting for children. Children enjoy small group time, eating lunch, and building during center time. At the same time, these are all examples of when children can pick up germs and pass them along to their friends. This is why it's important to implement appropriate hand washing procedures.

Hand washing is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of germs and illnesses in child care. It is important that children learn at an early age how to properly wash their hands to decrease the chances of illnesses caused by germs.

## Hand Washing Steps for Children and Child Care Staff

When washing hands:

- Use liquid soap and warm running water. Avoid bar soap; it can be a source of germs.

- Rub hands together building a lather for at least 20 seconds or sing the entire ABC Song. The song helps children know how long to wash their hands.
- Wash between fingers, under fingernails, wrists, and up forearms.
- Rinse hands, but leave water running to avoid picking up germs from the faucet.
- Dry hands with a single use towel (paper or cloth).
- Use paper towel as a barrier to turn off faucets.



## When to Wash Your Hands

Always wash your hands:

- Before entering and leaving the center
- After using the restroom
- Before and after serving and eating or drinking food items
- After leaving outdoor playtime
- Before and after changing diapers
- Before and after giving first aid
- After handling garbage
- Before and after feeding infants
- Before and after meals and snacks
- After smoking
- Before setting the table
- Before and after handling raw foods
- After coughing or sneezing into hands



### Hand Washing Questions – Can You Say Yes?

1. Is there a hand washing policy for both staff and children at your center? The policy should include how, when, and where to wash hands for both children and staff.
2. Is there a designated staff member who regularly checks to ensure soap, warm water, and paper towels are available in hand washing areas? This person should be appointed to check the hand washing areas on a regular basis. This person should know who to inform if hand washing areas are not up to the center's standards and how to ensure that the area is working properly.
3. Does the child care staff assist and/or supervise children washing their hands before and after children's meals and snacks? Children should never be allowed to wash their hands without the supervision of adults. Always help children wash their hands properly to decrease the chances of germs causing illnesses.

#### Sources

National Food Service Management Institute. (2011). *Care connection*. University, MS: Author.