

Background Information for Teachers

- Hand washing is *the most important* infection control measure.
- Careful hand washing has been shown to reduce the incidence of diarrhea in early childhood programs by half.
- Kids who wash their hands are sick less and have fewer absences. Attendance in school matters and hand washing plays an important role in keeping kids in school.
- Young children learn through their senses. Because germs cannot be seen, felt, tasted or heard making them tangible through play is a great way to teach about the importance of hand washing. Singing, drawing, building and telling stories are great ways to teach about the importance of hand washing.
- Lead by example—Children make healthy choices more often when they see adults including healthy habits in their lives. Wash your hands often in the classroom.

GOAL

Children will know how and when to wash their hands.

We All wash Hands:

- Upon arrival at the center
- Before and after giving medications
- Before and after treating or bandaging a wound (nonporous gloves should be worn if there is contact with blood or body fluids)
- Before and after diapering, after toileting, or assisting with toileting
- Before and after food preparation, handling, eating, or any other food-related activity
- Before and after play in the water table
- After handling garbage
- Whenever hands are contaminated with blood or other body fluids
- After sneezing or blowing nose
- After handling animals
- After outdoor play

Healthy Habits throughout the day

At Meals and Snacks

All students and staff wash hands before and after meals. Remind them that we do this to stay healthy using a song to help them remember the message. (*Use the provided songs or make up your own to help children remember the steps and to help children keep washing for 20 seconds.*) When everyone has washed hands and is seated at the table it's easy to reinforce your hand washing message. For example,

Healthy Habits

Example Lessons-Hand Washing

“I see that everyone has washed their hands and we’re ready to eat. It’s so important to wash hands before you eat to help keep us healthy.”

Model healthy habits: Model proper hand washing with your students each and every time they wash their hands.

Centers

Include books about hand washing, germs and keeping healthy in the **library/reading center**.

Put an empty soap dispenser in the **dramatic play center** when it is set up as a home center and model the idea of helping the dolls wash their hands before they sit down to eat.

Transitions

When lining up to return to the classroom, or when dismissing children from circle to meal time, sing one of your hand washing songs in advance (with motions). This will help them make a mental picture of hand washing that will support their follow-through in effective hand washing.

Home-School Connection

Find out if you have parents who work in health care or in food service and invite them to come in and be “experts” about how they prevent the spread of germs at their work. Let them demonstrate how they are expected to reduce germs as well as talk about how they learned it was important.

Send home a copy of your class book about hand washing and ask parents to read it with their children. Ask them to share their thoughts about the book with you and their child (in an email, or in a note or verbally) so that you can share at circle time.

Additional Ideas: