

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene, including hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer, is extremely important in preventing infectious disease transmission in a classroom environment.

Many people tend to minimize the significance of hand hygiene, often forgetting or eliminating hand washing due to busy schedules, lack of available soap and water, and inconvenience, but this is the single most important practice to prevent the spread of infectious disease. It is also the best method to protect children from infection in the classroom setting.

Necessary components for proper hand washing are:

SOAP, CLEAN WATER and FRICTION.



- Areas most frequently missed during hand washing
- Less frequently missed
- Not missed

(Adapted from Taylor L (1978), An evaluation of hand washing techniques - I, Nursing Times, 12 January, pp 54-55)

PROPER HAND WASHING TECHNIQUE

- Wet hands with clean warm water
- Apply soap and rub hands together to create a lather
- Scrub all surfaces of the hands including the palms, back of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails
- Continue washing hands for 20 seconds, about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” song twice
- Rinse hands well to remove all soap
- Dry hands completely with a towel or air dryer
- Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the door to avoid recontamination

Waterless Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizer

- Use when soap and water are not available
- Can not be used when hands are visible dirty
- Do not substitute when handling or preparing food
- Do not overuse, traditional hand washing is best
- Supervise children while they are using hand sanitizer
- Use *friction* while using the alcohol-based sanitizer
- Should contain 62% or greater Ethyl Alcohol

How to use Hand Sanitizer:

- Apply small amount of hand sanitizer to the palm
- Rub hands together covering all surfaces, much like when washing hands with soap and water
- Rub until hand sanitizer is absorbed completely and hands become dry

Gloves and diaper changes

- Hand washing (for both the staff member’s hands and the child’s hands) is an important last step in a diaper change even when using gloves.

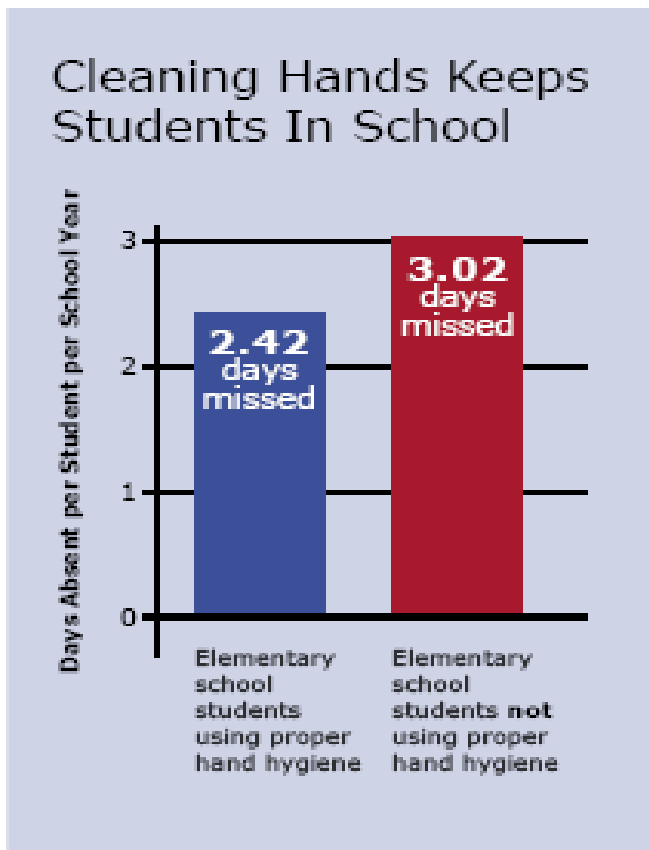
“Hand Washing is key. Diarrheal outbreaks could be cut in half by requiring staff to wash their hands and the child’s hands after changing diapers.”

FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Why young children are at increased risk

- Young children are at increased risk for contracting infectious diseases because they:
 - are grouped together, are exposed to many new germs
 - have immune systems that are not fully developed to fight germs
 - do not have complete control of body fluids that contain germs
 - have personal habits that spread germs
 - thumb sucking
 - rubbing eyes
 - putting things in their mouths

Hand washing and absenteeism



- “A study of 305 school children found that those who washed their hands four times a day had 24% fewer sick days due to respiratory illness and 51% fewer sick days due to upset stomach.” www.cdc.gov

Clean Classroom Environment

Maintaining a clean classroom environment reduces the presence of germs and the spread of infectious diseases, and therefore, protects the health of students, teachers, school staff, and parents.

Infection Prevention

General infection prevention measures and maintaining personal hygiene reduces the spread of infectious diseases in a school setting.

- Encourage children, teachers, and all school personnel to wash hands ***frequently*** using soap and water for at least 20 seconds and to assist children as needed.
- Substitute alcohol-based hand sanitizer when clean water and soap are not available
- Encourage appropriate respiratory etiquette: Cover coughs and sneezes with tissue. Throw away tissues immediately and use hand hygiene. If a tissue is not available, sneeze or cough into the elbow or upper sleeve.
- Teach children to properly dispose of used tissues.
- Provide tissues and trashcans in classrooms and on school buses.
- Advise parents to keep sick children home from school
- Remain at home when ill and encourage other to do the same.
- Avoid close contact (less than 3 feet of space) with those who are sick/ill.
- Maintain and promote good personal hygiene; bathe and wash hands regularly
- Discourage touching the eyes, nose, and mouth
- Maintain a clean classroom environment
- Ensure commonly used areas such as door handles, eating surfaces, and desk are clean and disinfected.
- Keep open wounds clean and covered with a bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds and bandages
- Discourage sharing eating utensils, glassware, or personal items such as toothbrushes, combs, razors, towels, clothing or other items that come into contact with bare skin.
- Clean shared sports equipment with antiseptic before each use or use a cloth or a towel as a barrier between the skin and the equipment.
- Avoid skin to skin contact with anyone who has a Staph infection.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle that includes a nutritious diet and adequate sleep.

Resources:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/handhygiene/clean/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5116a1.htm>

Texas A&M Health Science Center, School or Rural Public Health

Texas Department of State Health Services