

# CHILD CARE

plus +

WINTER 1998

*Supporting Inclusion in Early Childhood Settings*

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## + Hooray for Handwashing!

Young children have many charming characteristics, including curiosity, impulsiveness, and a desire to explore. As young children explore their surroundings, the likelihood of coming into contact with germs and infection increases. Young children with disabilities and chronic illnesses may be especially vulnerable.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated firmly that properly washing hands is the most important strategy in the prevention of disease. Clean hands limit the spread of diarrhea, staph infection, eye infection, colds, and gastrointestinal (stomach) diseases common in early childhood programs.

The more often you wash hands, the more likely it will be that you and the children will stay healthy. To see if the adults and children in your program are washing hands at the most important times, ask yourself the following questions.

Does everyone wash hands:

- ▶ after arriving at the program or coming in from outside?
- ▶ after using the bathroom or diapering?
- ▶ before preparing, handling, or serving food items?
- ▶ before AND after eating?
- ▶ after coming in contact with any body fluids (saliva, nasal discharge, mucus, blood, or vomit)?
- ▶ before giving medication?

A quick pass under water and a cursory wipe with a towel are not enough to prevent the spread of bacteria and disease. Carefully following these three guidelines will result in properly washed hands:

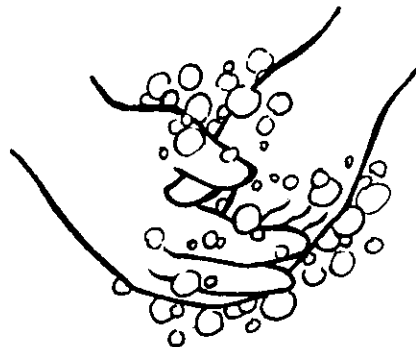
**1** Use running water, and let the water drain away. Having a common, water-filled basin can actually be an invitation for germs and bacteria to grow! The

water does not have to be warm, but warm water feels more pleasant than cold and may help to increase the amount of time spent washing.

**2** Create friction by rubbing your hands together, both front and back, briskly for at least ten seconds. The friction you create is the key to getting rid of germs. Using soap helps to remove visible dirt on your hands and also makes it easy to create friction. If possible, use liquid soap since young children may have difficulty handling slippery bars of soap. Because the friction removes the germs, it is not necessary for soap to be anti-bacterial.

**3** Dry your hands before turning off the water. Use a single-use or disposable towel to thoroughly dry each hand front and back. THEN turn off the faucet with the paper towel to prevent contaminating your hands with germs on the faucet handles.

In order for handwashing to be an effective strategy for preventing the spread of infection, it must be done frequently. This means that handwashing activities need to be embedded in the program curriculum and practiced on a regular basis by children as well as adults. + KMG



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## + FROM THE SOURCE

### The Public Health Nurse

Because public health nurses understand the impact of handwashing, they may be the most thrilled with your efforts to practice handwashing and teach it to young children. A public health nurse is a registered nurse who works in the community, caring for patients in their homes or in community centers. Other titles for public health nurse are district nurse, community health nurse, visiting nurse, and nurse consultant.

The role of the public health nurse is prevention. He or she has current brochures, pamphlets, posters, and supplementary resources about handwashing and other important health issues. He or she may even be willing to come to your program and lead a circle time on *Mr. Germ* or another activity which promotes handwashing and disease prevention.

You can easily call a public health nurse on the telephone. They are listed in the government pages of the telephone book under the county listing. Public health nurses are available to provide guidelines for giving medication in child care, offer advice as to when to call a doctor, and answer questions about common early childhood diseases and immunizations.

Public health nurses across the nation currently have federal support to create programs that connect their health resources with the resources of local child care resource and referral agencies. These programs are designed to make access to health information related to child care even more readily available to parents and providers in early childhood settings. + SLM

## + MAKING IT WORK

### Rub-a-Dub Song

In *The ABC's of Clean*, the Soap and Detergent Association uses the Rub-a-Dub song to teach handwashing in a fun and memorable way. You can sing the words in a sing-song voice or to your favorite tune while you and the children are washing hands. (Repeat the chorus after each verse.)

### Rub-A-Dub Song

(Chorus)

It's fun to scrub; it's fun to rub,  
It's fun to rub-a-dub, while we scrub,  
Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub dub, rub-a-dub while we scrub,  
It's fun to rub-a-dub while we scrub.

(Verse 1)

Turn the faucet on; make sure the water's warm.  
Put the soap on your hands, & make a soapy storm.  
Scrub-a-dub each hand, each finger, thumb, & wrist.  
Scrub-a-dub all over, so not a spot is missed.

(Verse 2)

Hold your hands below the faucet—  
Like leaves beneath the rain—  
'Til you see the soap storm, spinning down the drain.  
Now take a paper towel, & dry both of your hands;  
Dry the left, & dry the right, & now you understand.

+ KMG

## + NOTES FROM HOME:

### Between Child Care and Home

Children have a lot to teach adults and recently, my child taught our entire family an important hygiene lesson. Abigail started at a local preschool last fall, and she loves the opportunity to play with the other children, participate in different kinds of activities, and learn new skills. One skill she learned really surprised us! After several weeks, I noticed that my daughter frequently washed her hands after using the bathroom, and she often commented that the soap we used at home wasn't like the soap at school. When I mentioned this to Abigail's teacher, she told me that handwashing was a priority at their program and that they actually taught the children how to wash hands and embedded handwashing into their daily routines. The staff's conscientious approach to handwashing sure made an impression on Abigail. I know that handwashing is important, but somehow I never took the time to actually teach our children to wash their hands. I spent some time observing in the program, and I learned two things that we have adopted at home. First, kids need access to the sink so they can independently wash their hands (we put a stool in the bathroom so that Abigail can reach the sink). Second, kids are more likely to wash their hands if it is fun and easy (we added cartoon soap and a special nail brush shaped like a whale). It took Abigail (and the lessons she learned at preschool) to remind our whole family that handwashing is important. +

# + SPOTLIGHT: Healthy Child Care America

The Healthy Child Care America campaign is a collaborative effort of health care professionals, early childhood professionals, and families, working in partnership to improve the health and well-being of children in child care settings.

The Healthy Child Care America Campaign was "kicked off" on May 10, 1995, as Donna Shalala, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, opened the National Child Care Health Forum. The Forum brought together 180 health professionals and early childhood professionals from local, state, and national organizations and agencies. Together they framed a *Blueprint for Action*, developing five goals for health and safety in child care and suggesting ten steps communities can take to promote healthy and safe child care. The goals are:

- 1. Safe, healthy child care environments for all children, including those with special health needs.
- 2. Up-to-date and easily accessible immunizations for children in child care.
- 3. Access to quality health, dental, and developmental screening and comprehensive follow-up for children in child care.
- 4. Physical and mental health consultation, support and education for all families, children, and child care providers.
- 5. Health, nutrition, and safety education for children in child care, their families, and child care providers.

The community action steps are:

- ONE: Promote safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate environments for all children in child care.
- TWO: Increase immunization rates and preventive services for children in child care settings.
- THREE: Assist families in accessing key public and private health and social service programs.
- FOUR: Promote and increase comprehensive access to health screenings.
- FIVE: Conduct health and safety education and pro-

motion programs for children, families, and child care providers.

SIX: Strengthen and improve nutrition services in child care.

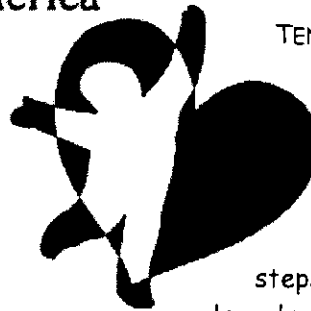
SEVEN: Provide training and ongoing consultation to child care providers and families in the areas of social and emotional health.

EIGHT: Expand and provide ongoing support to child care providers and families caring for children with special health needs.

NINE: Use child care health consultants to help develop and maintain healthy child care.

TEN: Assess and promote the health, training, and work environment of child care providers.

Healthy  
Child Care  
America



Communities are strongly encouraged to launch their own Healthy Child Care Campaign, building on the ten steps outlined above, yet focusing on local goals and priorities. There are already examples to learn from. Some communities have created health "warmlines" linking child care providers with an on-call health provider who is familiar with the particular needs of children in child care. Other communities have involved health professionals in their licensing and monitoring processes. Rural areas have used satellite linkages to access health and safety training. Medicaid has funded efforts among child care networks in order to enroll eligible children in the Medicaid program. The campaign also has a newsletter, which is free to early childhood professionals.

The national Child Care Bureau has all of the information, resources, and technical assistance you might need to help your community form its own Healthy Child Care Campaign. + KMG

For information or to receive a newsletter, contact:

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200 Independence Avenue, Room 320-F  
Washington, DC 20201

Toll-Free (888) 227-5409 Phone: (202) 690-5641  
FAX: (202) 690-5600 E-mail: [childcare@aap.org](mailto:childcare@aap.org)  
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/>

## + What do I do when . . . ?

*QUESTION: I totally understand the importance of handwashing. But I do not know how to teach handwashing to a child with serious delays or disabilities.*

**ANSWER:** Few young children actually understand the importance of handwashing as it relates to health. Most children go along with requests to wash their hands because it's part of the routine or because they enjoy an opportunity to play in water. These characteristics also apply to children with disabilities, but there are a couple of strategies that may help you make sure that they too learn to wash their hands correctly and regularly.

First, be sure that you have handwashing firmly established in your routine so that it becomes a familiar and expected part of the day. Routines that children can count on make it easier for them to get in the habit of handwashing. If everybody washes hands at certain times, it makes more sense to each child.

The second strategy is more complicated. You need to carefully assess your handwashing station to be sure there are no major obstacles for the child with a disability. Watch the child closely to see what he or she can and cannot do in your current setup. Can the child reach the sink, faucet handles, soap, water, and towels? Is there an easier way to get soap, turn on the water, or tear off a towel? If there is an obstacle, you may need to brainstorm with child care staff, the child's parents, and other professionals to come up with a way to make these steps achievable for the child.

Finally, while independent handwashing may be a child's long-term goal, the most immediate need is to remove germs. Offering a bit of assistance with handwashing

only takes a second or two and the health benefits are well worth the time spent helping a child with a disability accomplish this important task. + SAM

Child Care plus+ staff are available to answer questions, brainstorm, problem-solve, and provide resources and information regarding healthy routines for young children.

Call 1-800-235-4122

## + RESOURCE REVIEW

*Child Health ALERT* is an independent newsletter evaluating the latest developments that affect the health and safety of young children. Feature articles include child safety hints, product recalls, infections/illness, medications, and immunizations. This newsletter is a valuable resource for early childhood professionals and parents as well. Individual articles may be reproduced. Published 11 times per year, subscription rates are \$29/year or \$52/two years. Call 781-239-1762 or write Child Health ALERT, PO Box 610228, Newton Highlands, MA 02161

*CHILD CARE plus+* is designed to support inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood settings by supporting child care providers, parents, and community service providers including social workers, therapists, physicians, teachers, and administrators. *CHILD CARE plus+* is published quarterly. The subscription price is \$ 5.00 per year (four issues). Contents may be reproduced without permission.

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