

Why is hand washing so important?

- Hands are used for all sorts of activities during the course of a day.
- Hands easily become contaminated e.g. after we have been to the toilet.
- Germs on a child's hand can be easily passed to other children's hands by direct touch or by contamination of objects.
- Once on the hands it is easy for germs to get into the mouth. Many infections are spread this way.
- If hands are thoroughly washed after using the toilet the number of germs they carry will be greatly reduced.

When should hands be washed?

- Before handling the line.
- Before eating and drinking.
- After handling pets.
- When hands look or feel dirty.

It is important for children to be encouraged to wash their hands after every visit to the toilet and prior to eating or preparing food. Children should be supervised where possible when hand washing to ensure good compliance.

For an effective handwash...

- Wet hands thoroughly.
- Apply soap.
- Follow the 6 step technique (see opposite).
- Rinse hands thoroughly.
- Dry hands thoroughly using disposable paper towels.

Alcohol hand rubs may be used on physically clean hands.

The 6-step hand decontamination technique



1. Palm to palm



2. Backs of hands



3. Between fingers



4. Finger tips



5. Thumbs and wrists



6. Nails

Children should be encouraged to develop a good hand washing technique so that they get their hands thoroughly clean. It does not need to take a long time to get hands really clean; a ten to fifteen second lather will remove most dirt.

It is important to wet hands before applying soap, and make sure all parts of the hands and fingers are cleaned, especially the fingertips, which often get missed. Hands should be rinsed well and then dried really thoroughly.

How else can hands be protected?

Any fresh wound, cut etc. (*less than 24 hours old*) on the hands should be covered with a waterproof dressing.

What else can help?

Washing hands with your child at home can be fun and more importantly will support the learning they have whilst at school or nursery.

If we teach our children that good hand hygiene is fun then it will soon develop from being a game into normal behaviour (*e.g. use of colourful child friendly soap dispenser*).

Parents are encouraged to promote good hand hygiene in their children by doing this and don't forget children learn from example!