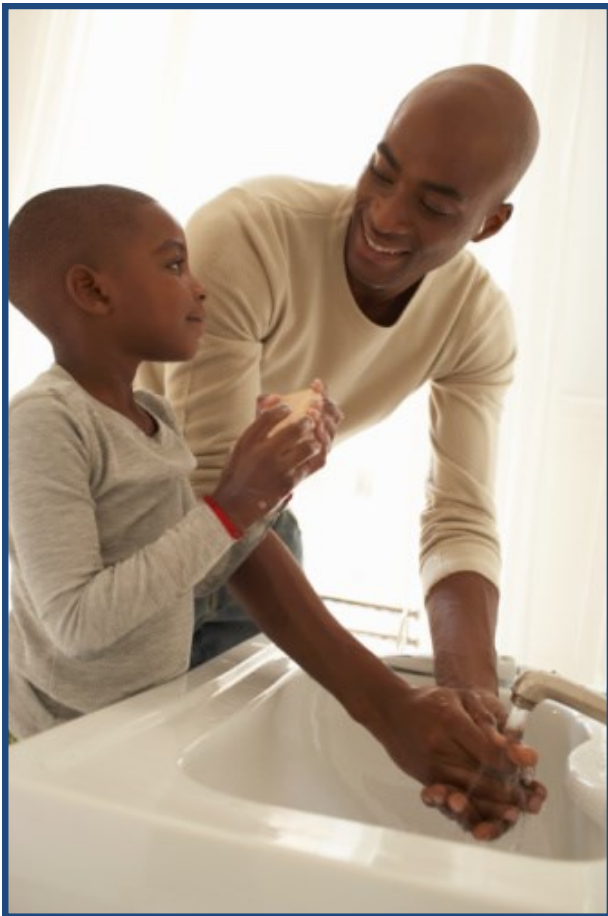


What Child Care Providers Need to Know About Hand Washing

Why to Wash

When you're caring for a group of children, it might seem like it's impossible to keep them (and yourself) from getting sick. The ways children naturally explore their environments and play together can lead to sharing germs right along with sharing toys. The Department of Family and Protective Services Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers states that, "research has shown the single most effective practice that prevents the spread of germs in the child-care setting is good hand washing by caregivers and children." It is important that you and the children you care for wash your hands at the right times and in the right way throughout the day.

When to Wash



A good rule of thumb is that you should wash your hands any time you come into contact with bodily fluids (e.g. eating, drinking, changing diapers, using the bathroom, wiping a child's nose, smoking) or potentially harmful substances (e.g. cleaners, chemicals, animals, dirt on outdoor play equipment, raw food), and before you touch things that you or a child will consume (i.e. food or medication). It is also important that you wash your hands upon arrival to the classroom and when you depart for the day.

Children should wash their hands before they eat or play in a water table, after playing outside, playing with sensory materials (e.g. sand), or interacting with animals, and after they use the bathroom or have a diaper change.

How to Wash

The procedure for hand washing recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for both children and adults is:

1. Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap
2. Rub your hands together to create a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails
3. Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds (to help time yourself: hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice)
4. Rinse your hands well under running water
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry
6. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet



How NOT to Wash

Make sure you and the children wash your hands with soap and running water. Hot water isn't required, but if you do use hot water to wash children's hands, it needs to be less than 120°F so children don't get scalded. Don't use pre-moistened towelettes, wipes, or waterless hand-sanitizers as a replacement for hand washing. These methods are not as effective at getting rid of germs as washing with soap and water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers are flammable and can be toxic to children if ingested.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control (2013). "Wash Your Hands" retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/index.html>

Department of Family and Protective Services (2014). "Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers" retrieved from https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/documents/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/746_Centers.pdf

Department of Family and Protective Services (2014). "Minimum Standards for Child-Care Homes" retrieved from https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/documents/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/747_Homes.pdf