



Hygiene fact sheet

One of the most effective ways to stop germs from spreading is to wash and dry hands correctly. Many infections can be spread by germs passed on from one person to another, these can include:

- the common cold
- diarrhoea
- vomiting.

These infections can pose problems for caregivers, parents and children in group care.

The risk of infection is greater for children who may be with other children constantly - such as those in group care. This is merely because of the children's greater exposure to a larger number of people and therefore germs; and to young children's poor hygiene due to their developmental stage¹.

However, germ transmission can be reduced and prevented through correct handwashing². Knowledge and continued practice of correct handwashing technique is essential to reduce germs from spreading in any environment but is critical in childcare environments. Commitment to hand hygiene and related guidelines by caregivers has been identified as a crucial means of infection control in child care settings³.

More serious infections such as hepatitis A and viral meningitis which are also spread by germs passed from one person to another, can be reduced and prevented through correct handwashing behaviour¹.

To stop germs being passed in child care settings, it is important that all children and staff know how to wash their hands correctly. It is also important to wash hands on a regular basis and for the correct amount of time. The good news is that Queensland Health has developed a handy wash and brush timer.

References and further reading

- 1 Queensland Health Germ Busters Early Childhood. 2001. Improving hygiene in your centre, Australia.
- 2 Chin, James. 2000. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 17th ed. New York. American Public Health Association
- 3 Miller, T. & D Patrick. Dec. 2001. The Effect of a Prescribed Hand Care Procedure on Bacterial Transmission by Touch Contact in a Childcare Environment.
- 4 NHMRC 2005 Staying Healthy in Child Care. Preventing infectious diseases in child care. 4th edition.

Hand hygiene and related guidelines

Staying Healthy in Childcare provides the following up-to-date information on hand hygiene and related guidelines.

How to wash hands:

- wet hands with running water and spread liquid soap over hands
- rub your hands vigorously as you wash them
- use your new wash and brush timer for the full process or count to 10 slowly
- wash your hands all over – particularly wash palms, backs of hands and around wrists in between fingers, under finger nails
- rinse hands thoroughly, remove all suds and germs – thorough rinsing will help prevent dermatitis from suds
- turn off the tap using paper towel
- pat dry your hands with a new paper towel.

When to wash children's and your hands:

- on centre arrival/departure/outside play/rest time
- before food, babies bottles and medicine
- after nappy change/removing gloves
- after wiping any noses/toilet
- after garbage/cleaning blood or faeces.

Items in the facility that should be washed daily:

- bathroom tap handles, toilet seats, toilet handles, door knobs, floors and other facility surfaces
- toys and objects put in the mouth
- mattress covers and linen if each child does not use the same mattress cover everyday.

Useful resources

Germ Busters Early Childhood is a comprehensive hygiene improvement program that includes resources and activities for children, parents and staff. The program is fun to use and is easily incorporated into the daily routine of child care facilities and schools. *Germ Busters Early Childhood* is an ideal tool for childcare facilities undergoing accreditation. To order your copy of *Germ Busters*, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/germbusters