

# Important Concepts About Handwashing

Prepared by ND Child Care Resource & Referral Health Consultant Team

1. You must use running water which drains out – not a basin of water. A container of water spreads germs.
2. You must use soap, preferably liquid or foam.
  - Use plain soap. Antibacterial soap is not required or necessary.
3. You must rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. This helps remove the germs. Rinse hands well under running water until all the soil and soap are gone.
4. Long nails (artificial or real) trap germs, regardless of how well a person washes their hands. Fingernail polish can also trap germs if it is chipped. Experts recommend that child care providers keep their nails short and unpainted.
5. Jewelry (rings, bracelets, watches, etc.) also trap germs. For best practice, no jewelry should be worn during hours of child care. If jewelry is worn, don't remove rings before hand washing. It is best to keep rings on, and to wash them too as you are washing your hands. Push watches up with sleeves before washing.
6. Paper towels are recommended for drying hands instead of a cloth towel. To be eco-friendly, you can use wash cloths or cut up large sheets/towels into small squares to use for drying hands. Each child should have a separate one and it should only be used once.
7. It's important to turn off the faucet with a paper towel. The faucet is considered "dirty" at all times. If you touch it with clean hands, you will be re-contaminated. Ideally, then throw the paper towel into a lined, covered trash container with a foot pedal. *\*Licensing allows trash container to be uncovered for used paper towels*
8. Frequent handwashing can worsen sores and cuts on the hands or cause cracked, dry skin. These areas are hard to clean and can contain germs. Cuts should be washed well with soap and water and kept covered with a dry, clean bandage. Having hand lotion at the sink is a good way to prevent skin dryness and cracking.
9. When assisting a child in handwashing, either hold the child (if an infant) or have the child stand on a safety step at a height at which the child's hands can hang freely under the running water. Assist the child in performing all the steps for proper handwashing and then wash your own hands.
10. Hot water is not necessary, but warm water will be more comfortable and will help increase duration of handwashing.
11. If children wash their hands in the bathroom, it is recommended to disinfect the faucet and handle(s) before the children wash their hands before meals/snack.
12. Ideally handwashing sinks for food/bottle prep and diapering should be separate. If only one sink is available, then the faucet and handle(s) need to be disinfected between each use to prevent the spread of disease.
13. Hand sanitizers can be used by adults and children over 24 months when hands are not visibly dirty or at times not required by licensing to be done at a sink. Licensing requires handwashing at a sink for the following:
  - Before preparing or serving meals
  - After diapering
  - After using the toilet
  - After any procedure that may involve contact with body fluidsHand sanitizers should be used according to directions. Hand should be rubbed together until they are dry; this is important for children so they do not get hand sanitizer in their eyes or mouth. Hand sanitizers must always be used with supervision and kept out of the reach of children. Hand sanitizers must contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective. Because of the high alcohol content, hand sanitizers should be stored away from heat.
14. Dispensers of soap are recommended to be used until completely empty. Once emptied, the containers should be replaced with new or washed before refilled. Studies have shown that soap dispensers harbor bacteria and are not recommended to be "topped off" with soap.

Sources:  
CFOC, 3rd Edition, 2011

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