

## Most Important Concepts about Handwashing

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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.
  - Use plain soap. Antibacterial soap is not required or necessary.
3. You must rub your hands together for at least 10 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. If cloth towels are used, 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.
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 sanitize 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 sanitized between each use to prevent the spread of disease.

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13. Hand sanitizers should not be used in place of handwashing if a sink is available. Hand sanitizers cannot kill all bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. However, hand sanitizers should be used if there is no sink available. If using a hand sanitizer, hands must be completely covered and remain wet for at least 15 seconds to be effective. If hands are visibly dirty, it is recommended to use a wet wipe to clean hands before using hand sanitizer. It is also recommended that the product contain 60-90% alcohol; products with ethanol-based alcohol are recommended over products with isopropanol-based alcohol. Hand sanitizers should be kept out of the reach of children. Hand sanitizer is highly flammable, so it should be stored away from any heat source. Hand sanitizer should only be used with close supervision to make sure that children's hands are completely dry so children do not get hand sanitizer in their eyes or mouth. It is not best practice to use hand sanitizer with infants and toddlers; wet wipes would be a safer choice if a sink is not available.
  
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 used: Health and Safety in the Child Care Setting: Prevention of Infectious Disease, The California Child Care Health Program, 1998.

Internal Medicine News, 2002.

Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings, MMWR, Vol. 51, No. RR-16, October 25, 2002.

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