

What the Experts Say

Hand Washing

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WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

5-100 → Colds and flues cause many children to miss school or do poorly at school. Colds and flues are spread through contact with contaminated hands and objects like pencils, toys, and doorknobs. **Regular hand washing with soap and clean water is the best way to avoid illness and prevent the spread of germs to others.**¹⁻⁵ However, many people either do not wash their hands regularly or do not wash them well enough to remove germs.⁶⁻⁸ Children who learn when and how to properly wash their hands have less infections and fewer absences from school.^{4,5,9}

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

5-400 → The common cold causes more than 52 million children to become sick each year, **resulting in nearly 22 million days of school absences.** During flu season (November to March), 10 to 20 percent of Americans get the flu.^{10,11} Germs most often spread from person to person through contaminated hands.¹

- Hygiene and hand washing are a major area of concern in early care and education settings.¹² Young children are more likely than adults to become ill from colds and viruses because they¹³⁻¹⁶:
 - ◇ Have not yet been exposed to many different germs to build up their immune system
 - ◇ Have close contact with each other
 - ◇ Put shared toys in their mouths
 - ◇ Share materials such as crayons, pencils, books, and toys.

Many people do not wash their hands regularly or do not wash them well enough to remove germs.⁶⁻⁸ People do not wash their hands for many reasons. They forget, are too busy, do not have soap and water readily available, do not know the proper method, or worry about dryness or damage to skin.^{7,17-20} People tend to wash their hands to remove dirt, rinse food off after eating, or make their hands look and smell good. Concerns about health do not seem to be the motive for washing one's hands.⁶ Perhaps this is because germs are "invisible." For children, it is hard to understand germs when you can't see them.

Good Hand Washing

Proper hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs.^{1-5,21} Children who regularly wash their hands become sick less often and miss fewer days of school due to illness.^{5,8,15,22,23}

Proper hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs.

Vigorous hand washing with soap for 20 seconds is the best way to remove germs. Steps to good hand washing are:

1. Wet hands with warm water. Although cold water works too, warm water makes it more comfortable so you can wash for the full amount of time. Do not use hot water. Repeatedly washing hands with hot water can irritate skin.
2. Use soap. Antibacterial soap is no more effective than regular soap.²⁴
3. Vigorously rub hands together for at least 20 seconds. Rub all parts of the hands and fingers. For children, 20 seconds will feel like a long time until it becomes a habit. To make sure hands are washed for 20 seconds, sing a hand washing song. Make up words about washing to a familiar tune such as “Row, Row, Row, Your Boat” or “Happy Birthday.” Singing either song twice takes about 20 seconds.
4. Rinse with warm water.
5. Dry with a clean towel at home and a paper towel or air dryer when in public.
6. Use the paper towel to turn off the faucet to avoid getting more germs.^{2,7,25,26}

5-200

Children will need assistance to learn all of the hand washing steps and stay focused on washing for the full 20 seconds.² Due to undeveloped fine motor skills, young children may need assistance with soap dispensers and turning the water on and off. Children need to practice proper hand washing techniques with adult over and over until they are able to do all the steps on their own.

The best way to teach a child the healthy habit of good hand washing is for parents and children to practice together often.

The best way to teach a child the healthy habit of good hand washing is for parents and children to practice together often both at home and when out in the public. As when teaching any new skill or routine, parents should consider the time of day when their children are most alert, their attention span, and what else is going on in the home.²⁷

The time parents spend teaching their children a new skill can also serve as important family nurturing and conversation time together. Children can sing a favorite song, show off counting skills, learn about the parts of their hands, or just enjoy the attention of a parent. Parents should praise their child when they do good job of washing their hands (e.g. “You washed all your fingers.” “You washed your hands all the way to 20 seconds.”)

To show children the importance of good hand washing, older preschoolers and school age children can do an experiment. Have children wash their hands with washable paint, glitter,

or other product to simulate the presence of germs to see where they missed washing. This experiment helps children see that a quick rinse does not remove all of the germs. Only a full 20 seconds of washing with soap and running water will remove all of the glitter.²⁸

When to Wash Hands

Children must learn how frequently to wash their hands and the times it is most important. To prevent the spread of germs, people need to wash their hands in the following situations^{2,26}:

- Before eating
- Before preparing food
- After touching raw meat, poultry, or fish
- Before and after caring for a sick person
- After changing a diaper (both adult and child need to wash hands)
- After using the restroom
- After nose blowing, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal or cleaning up after a pet
- After touching garbage
- When hands are dirty.
- Wash hands more frequently when someone in the house is sick or during flu season (November to March).

Hand Sanitizers

When soap and clean water are not available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is an effective alternative to hand washing.^{13,14,29} Alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill germs when rubbed on the hands. Sanitizers may include antimicrobial substances specifically designed to kill common germs. Hand sanitizers can be more convenient than soap and water because they take less time to use and act rapidly to kill germs. Apply the sanitizer to the palm of one hand and then rub hands together so all hand surfaces have been rubbed and the hands are dry.^{2,14,25,29,30} However, if visible dirt is on the hands, wash hands using soap and water.^{30,31}

The preferred method for cleaning hands should always be washing with soap and water because hand sanitizers may not eliminate all types of germs. It is important to remember that hand sanitizers are considered an effective alternative only when soap and water are not available.

Family Routines and Healthy Habits

Developing healthy habits during preschool are more likely to last into adulthood.^{4,32,33} A family's good health habits are created through routines, including hand washing.³⁴ Family routines done as part of a family's daily life are predictable and allow children to learn and practice important skills.³⁵ Children who see their parents routinely washing their hands learn hand washing is important and are likely to repeat what they see their parents do.

Children who are in the habit of washing their hands at home are more likely to carry this healthy habit to school and other public places.

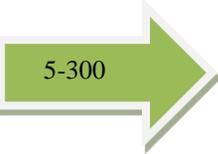
Other Strategies to Reduce Illness in the Home

In addition to regular hand washing, families can use other strategies to prevent the spread of colds and other infections¹⁸:

- Keep surfaces clean and dry, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Avoid kissing and touching others who are ill.
- Avoid rubbing eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cough or sneeze into the elbow.
- Wash hands after covering mouth or nose for a cough or sneeze.
- Avoid sharing toys – young children frequently place objects in their mouths.
- Wash shared toys.
- Stay away from work or school with fever or when symptoms interfere with concentration and performance.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Talk to children about hand washing. Remind children to wash their hands before eating and after using the restroom, blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Put up a hand washing poster above the sink in your classroom to remind children when and how to wash up.
- Teach a hand washing song to help children stay focused on washing for the full 20 seconds. Let parents know the song you sing in class so they can reinforce at home.
- Let parents know that hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs and reduce illness and missed school and work days.
- Share the steps to effective hand washing with parents. Encourage parents to choose an unhurried moment and make it a fun and relaxed learning experience. In addition to learning hand washing skills, this is an opportunity for children to sing a favorite song, practice skills such as counting and naming parts of the hand and related vocabulary (i.e. fingers, knuckles, wrists, front/back, between) or just enjoy the attention of a parent.
- Encourage parents to model regular and good hand washing at home so their child will see that hand washing is important to the family.
- Model good hand washing in the classroom by washing your own hands regularly and effectively. When children see you washing your hands as well as talking about it, they will see that it is important and will be more likely to follow all of the steps.



5-300

5-500

- Make sure your classroom or washing areas have an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, and clean running water.
- When soap and water are not available, model and encourage the use of hand sanitizer. **Make sure your classroom has an adequate supply of hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.**
- Repeat hand washing lessons and reminders more frequently during flu season (November to March).

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/handwashing/

Microbe World – Clean hands campaign

www.washup.org

TIPS for Great Kids! - Hand washing video

www.tipsforgreatkids.com (Click on, “Watch Dads Practicing Parenting Tips with Their Kids.” Then, scroll down and click on the “Hand washing” video.)

Arkansas Department of Health

www.healthy.arkansas.gov (type hand washing in the search box)

Hand washing poster

www.rvis.edu.bh/uploaded/School_Nurse/handwashing_e.gif

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*Quick Reference***HAND WASHING STEPS****01-B4a****Parent Messages**

- Regular hand washing with soap and clean water for 20 seconds is the best way to avoid illness and prevent the spread of germs to others.
- Young children need help reaching the sink, getting soap, turning the water on and off, and staying focused for the full 20 seconds.

Parent Skills

- Teaches child all the steps to good hand washing.
- Makes hand washing a fun time and praises the child's efforts.
- Makes sure soap, running water, and clean towels are available to child.
- Makes hand washing a family routine (e.g., before and after eating and after toileting, coughing or sneezing).

*Parent Tip***HAND WASHING STEPS**

Parents,

Children who do a good job of washing their hands get sick less often. Young children need help reaching the sink, getting soap, and turning the water on and off. The best way to teach your child this healthy habit is to practice these steps together, over and over:

- Wet hands with running water.
- Add soap.
- Rub all parts of the hands and fingers for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse and dry.
- Use the towel to turn off the faucet.

Washing for 20 seconds may feel like a long time. To help your child wash long enough, sing a song, count, or say the ABCs. Praise your child for doing a good job for each step.



In a busy day, it is easy skip or rush hand washing. Try to slow down and enjoy this special time together.

PASOS PARA LAVARSE LAS MANOS

Padres,

Los niños que hacen un buen trabajo lavándose las manos se enferman menos a menudo. Los niños pequeños necesitan ayuda para alcanzar el lavamanos, agarrar el jabón, y abrir y cerrar el agua. La mejor manera de enseñarle a su niño estos hábitos saludables, es practicando los siguientes pasos juntos una y otra vez:

- Humedezca las manos con agua corriente.
- Adhiera el jabón.
- Frote todas las partes de las manos y los dedos por al menos 20 segundos.
- Juagar y secar.
- Use la toalla para cerrar la canilla.

Lavarse por 20 segundos puede sentirse como un tiempo muy largo. Para ayudarle a su niño para que se lave lo suficiente, cántele una canción, cuente, o diga el abecedario. Elogie a su niño por hacer un buen trabajo en cada paso.



En un día ocupado es fácil no lavarse las manos o hacerlo demasiado rápido. Trate de hacerlo despacio y de disfrutar este tiempo especial juntos.

*Quick Reference***HAND WASHING IS A FAMILY HEALTH HABIT
01-B4b****Parent Messages**

- Colds and flu cause children to miss school or do poorly in school.
- Regular hand washing with soap and clean water is a healthy habit that protects the whole family from illness.
- Healthy families are created through routines and healthy habits that are repeated regularly as part of a family's daily life.

Parent Skills

- Models regular and thorough hand washing at home and in public places.
- Reminds child to wash hands at home and in public places.

*Parent Tip***HAND WASHING IS A FAMILY HEALTH HABIT**

Dear Parents,

You are my best teacher, especially for teaching me healthy habits like hand washing. I will get sick less if I wash my hands often. Help me wash my hands often at home and in public. When I see you wash your hands and when we wash our hands together, I learn:

- Hand washing with soap and clean water is a healthy habit.
- It is important to wash my hands at home and other places like school.
- Hand washing is important to keep our family healthy.

Love,
Your Child



Make sure hand washing is part of your family's daily routines to protect the whole family from spreading colds and flu.

LAVARSE LAS MANOS UN HÁBITO DE FAMILIA SALUDABLE

Queridos Padres,

Ustedes son los mejores maestros, especialmente para enseñarme a mi hábitos saludables como el lavarse las manos. Yo me enfermame menos si me lavo las manos más a menudo. Ayúdenme a lavarme las manos más a menudo en casa y en público. Cuando yo veo a ustedes lavarse las manos y cuando nos lavamos las manos juntos, yo aprendo:

- Que Lavarse las manos con agua limpia y jabón es un hábito saludable.
- Que es muy importante lavarme las manos en casa y en otros lugares como la escuela.
- Que el lavado de las manos es importante para mantener nuestra familia saludable.

Los Amo,
Su Hijo



Asegúrese que el lavado de las manos es parte de las rutinas diarias de familia para proteger la familia del contagios de gripas y catarros.

*Quick Reference***WHEN TO WASH HANDS****01-B4c****Parent Messages**

- Regular hand washing with soap and clean water is the best way to avoid illness and prevent the spread of germs to others.
- Both adults and children need to remember to wash their hands before and after certain activities.

Parent Skills

- Washes own hands at recommended times.
- Helps child wash hands at recommended times.
- Remembers to follow all the steps for effective hand washing.

*Parent Tip***WHEN TO WASH HANDS**

Parents,

Both kids and grown-ups need to wash hands to stop the spread of germs. Kids need to be reminded and helped to wash their hands. Important times to wash hands are:

- Before and after eating
- Before making a meal and after touching raw meat, poultry, or fish
- After touching garbage
- After using the restroom
- After changing a diaper (wash baby's hands too!)
- After touching an animal or cleaning up after a pet
- After playing in the dirt, sand, or outdoor water
- Any time hands are dirty
- Before and after caring for a sick person
- After wiping or blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing

Everyone in the family needs to wash their hands more often when someone in the house is sick or when it is flu season (November to March).

CUANDO LAVARSE LAS MANOS

Padres,

Ambos los niños y los más grandes tienen que lavarse las manos para parar el contagio de los gérmenes. A los niños hay que estarles recordando y ayudarles a lavarles las manos. Las horas importantes para lavarse las manos son:

- Antes y después de comida
- Antes de hacer las comidas o después de tocar carne, pollo o pescado crudo.
- Después de tocar basura
- Después de usar el baño
- Después de cambiar el pañal (lave las manos del bebé también!)
- Después de tocar un animal o después de limpiar una mascota
- Después de jugar afuera con tierra, arena o en agua.
- Cualquier momento en que las manos están sucias
- Antes y después del cuidado de una persona enferma
- Después de limpiarse o sonarse la nariz, toser o estornudar

Todas las personas en la casa deben lavarse las manos más a menudo cuando hay alguien enfermo en ella o cuando tenemos la temporada de la gripe (noviembre a marzo)

*Quick Reference***HAND SANITIZER****01-B4d****Parent Messages**

- Hand sanitizer needs to contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective.
- Hand sanitizer does not kill all types of cold and flu germs.
- Hand sanitizer is an effective alternative when soap and clean water is not available; however, soap and water are preferred method to remove germs.

Parent Skills

- Uses hand sanitizer when soap and clean water are not available.
- Shows child how to effectively use hand sanitizers.

*Parent Tip***HAND SANITIZER**

Parents,

Hand sanitizers can lower the number of germs on your hands, but they do not get rid of all types of germs. Use hand sanitizer only when soap and water are not available. The hand sanitizer needs to have at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizers are not intended to get rid of food or dirt on your hands.

How to use hand sanitizers:

- Put a small amount of hand sanitizer in one hand.
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the hand sanitizer over all parts of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

Hand sanitizer reduces germs and is convenient when you are out in public, even if it does not get rid of all the germs.

CUANDO LAVARSE LAS MANOS

Padres,

Ambos los niños y los más grandes tienen que lavarse las manos para parar el contagio de los gérmenes. A los niños hay que estarles recordando y ayudarles a lavarles las manos. Las horas importantes para lavarse las manos son:

- Antes y después de comida
- Antes de hacer las comidas o después de tocar carne, pollo o pescado crudo.
- Después de tocar basura
- Después de usar el baño
- Después de cambiar el pañal (lave las manos del bebé también!)
- Después de tocar un animal o después de limpiar una mascota
- Después de jugar afuera con tierra, arena o en agua.
- Cualquier momento en que las manos están sucias
- Antes y después del cuidado de una persona enferma
- Después de limpiarse o sonarse la nariz, toser o estornudar

Todas las personas en la casa deben lavarse las manos más a menudo cuando hay alguien enfermo en ella o cuando tenemos la temporada de la gripa (noviembre a marzo)

*Quick Reference***USE GLITTER TO EXPLAIN GERMS****01-B4e****Parent Messages**

- Children and adults may not think to wash their hands unless there is visible food or dirt on them.
- A pinch of glitter can serve as pretend germs so school-age children understand how easily germs spread and the importance of good hand washing.

Parent Skills

- Uses glitter as pretend germs to make a fun experiment hand washing experiment for older preschoolers and school age children.
- Helps child to use good hand washing.

*Parent Tip***USE GLITTER TO EXPLAIN GERMS**

Dear Parents,

When children can see dirt or food on their hands, they know their hands need washing. But germs are too small to see. Why would children need to wash something off their hands that they cannot see? Here is one way to teach older preschoolers and school age children about germs. You will need: hand lotion, glitter, paper towels, soap, and running water.

- Have the child rub lotion into both hands.
- Put a pinch of glitter in one hand. Tell the child to pretend it is germs.
- Press hands together and pull them apart. Rub surfaces of hands together. The child will see that “germs” are spreading. Everything the child touches will now have “germs” on it.
- Try wiping all the glitter off with a paper towel. The glitter will not go away.
- Now help your child wash hands with soap and running water for a full 20 seconds to remove the glitter.

USE BRILLO PARA EXPLICAR LOS GÉRMESES

Queridos Padres,

Cuando los niños pueden ver comida o sucio en sus manos ellos saben que sus manos necesitan lavarse. Pero los gérmenes son muy pequeños para verlos. Por qué un niño tendría que lavarse algo de sus manos que él no puedan ver? Aquí esta una vía por la cual usted le puede enseñar a niños en preescolar y en la escuela acerca de los gérmenes. Usted va a necesitar: loción para manos brillo, toallas de papel, jabón y agua corriente.

- Haga que el niño se frote loción en ambas manos.
- Ponga una pizca de brillo en una mano. Dígale al niño que se imaginé que estos son gérmenes.
- Presione las manos juntas y luego póngalas aparte. Frótese las superficies de las manos juntas. El niño verá que estos “gérmenes” se están propagando. Todo lo que el niño toque va a tener “gérmenes” en ello.
- Trate de sacar todo el brillo con una toalla de papel. El brillo no desaparecerá.
- Ahora ayude a su niño a lavarse las manos con jabón y agua corriente por un total de 20 segundos para remover el brillo.

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*Quick Reference***HAND WASHING SONGS****01-B4f****Parent Messages**

- Singing a hand washing song can help children stay focused on washing for the full 20 seconds.
- Make hand washing fun so children will want to wash hands.

Parent Skills

- Makes hand washing fun by singing
- Praises for doing each step in good hand washing.

*Parent Tip***HAND WASHING SONGS**

Dear Parents,

One of the best ways to teach me how to wash my hands right is to make it fun. To help me wash with soap and clean water for a full 20 seconds, let's sing a song. Singing one of these songs 2 times lasts 20 seconds.

(Tune: Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)

Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are
Soap and water, wash and scrub
Get those germs off, rub a dub
Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are.

(Tune: Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

Wash, wash, wash your hands
Get them nice and clean
Wash the front and wash the back
Wash fingers in between

Or we can have fun making up our own song!

Love,
Your Child

CANCIONES PARA LAVARSE LAS MANOS

Queridos Padres,

Una de las mejores vías para enseñarme a mí como lavarme las manos es hacerlo divertido. Para ayudarme a mí a lavarme con jabón y agua limpia por más de 20 segundos, vamos a cantar una canción. Cantar una de las siguientes canciones 2 veces, dura 20 segundos.

(Tune: Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)

Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are
Soap and water, wash and scrub
Get those germs off, rub a dub
Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are.

(Tune: Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

Wash, wash, wash your hands
Get them nice and clean
Wash the front and wash the back
Wash fingers in between

O podemos pasar un rato divertido inventando nuestra propia canción!

Los Amo,
Su Hijo

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