



HANDWASHING POLICY

SUB CATEGORY: Health, Hygiene and Safety

POLICY GOAL

Provide a healthy environment for children, educators and visitors by ensuring all children and adults practice good handwashing techniques to prevent the spread of infection.

RATIONALE

“Hand hygiene is one very effective way to control the spread of infection. Hand hygiene is a general term that refers to washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub. Hands can play an important role in the spread of infection. The best way to prevent the transmission of disease is through effective hand hygiene. This can be done with soap and water, which removes both dirt and germs from the hands; or by using an alcohol-based hand rub, which reduces the number of germs on the hands.

Soap and water

The most effective method of hand hygiene is using soap and water. Washing your hands with soap and running water loosens, dilutes and flushes off dirt and germs. Soap alone cannot remove dirt or kill germs— it is the combination of running water, rubbing your hands and the detergent in the soap that helps loosen the dirt, remove the germs and rinse them off your skin.

Alcohol-based hand rubs

It is important to remember that soap and water are the best option when your hands are visibly dirty. However, alcohol-based hand rubs have been proven to increase hand hygiene in healthcare settings, and it makes sense to have them in education and care services. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also known as antiseptic hand rubs, waterless hand cleaners, gels or hand sanitisers. They can be a fast and effective way to remove germs that may have been picked up by touching contaminated surfaces. Alcohol-based hand rubs reduce the number of germs on your hands; they do not remove dirt from your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs are useful when performing multiple tasks in which hands can potentially become contaminated; for example, when assisting children with eating, when on excursions, in the playground, or in other situations where soap and water are not always available. It is a good idea to place an alcohol-based hand rub at the entrance to the education and care service. This can help remind parents, carers and children (as well as educators and other staff) to have clean hands when they enter the service. If you have visible dirt, grease or food on your hands, it is preferable to wash your hands with soap and water, rather than use an alcohol-based hand rub. However, even if your hands are visibly dirty, using an alcohol-based hand rub is better than not cleaning your hands at all.

Alcohol-based hand rubs are safe to use as directed, but children may be at risk if they eat or drink the hand cleaner, inhale it, or splash it into their eyes or mouth. Alcohol-based hand rubs should be kept well out of reach of children and only used with adult supervision.

Antibacterial soap

Antibacterial soaps kill some (but not all) bacteria, and do not kill viruses. There is no place for the routine use of antibacterial soap in education and care services.

Hand drying

Effective hand drying is just as important as thorough hand washing. Damp hands pick up and transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands. Drying your hands thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off. Using disposable paper towel is the preferred option in education and care services. Cloth towels, if used, should be used by one person (i.e. not shared) and hung up to dry between uses. Cloth towels should be laundered regularly to reduce the risk of re-contaminating or cross-contaminating hands. Warm air dryers can also be useful, but it is worth considering that they take longer to dry hands than using paper towel, can only serve one person at a time, and are often not used for long enough to ensure dry hands.

Washing hands before wearing gloves

Wash your hands before putting on gloves so that you remove as many germs as possible from your hands. Otherwise, when you reach into the box of gloves, you can contaminate the other gloves in the box. When changing a nappy, it is very important to wash your hands before you put on gloves, so that when you have finished changing the child, you can remove the dirty gloves and dress the child without needing to interrupt the nappy-changing procedure to wash your hands before dressing the child.

Washing hands after wearing gloves

When you have finished a procedure that requires you to wear gloves, it is important to wash your hands thoroughly after removing the gloves, because any germs on your hands may have multiplied significantly while you were wearing the gloves. There may also be microscopic tears or holes in the gloves that can allow germs to contaminate your skin. When taking off the gloves, you may contaminate your hands with the dirty gloves; therefore, it is essential that you wash your hands.”¹

“How to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers, which don't require water, are an acceptable alternative when soap and water aren't available. If you use a hand sanitizer, make sure the product contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Follow these steps:

- *Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand. Check the label to find out the appropriate amount.*
- *Rub your hands together.*
- *Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.*

Kids need clean hands, too

Help children stay healthy by encouraging them to wash their hands frequently. Wash your hands with your child to show him or her how it's done. To prevent rushing, suggest washing hands for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. If your child can't reach the sink on his or her own, keep a step stool handy.

Be sure to supervise young children using alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Swallowing alcohol-based sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning. Store the container safely away after use.

¹ “5th Edition Staying Healthy Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services” Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council 2012 (updated June 2013)

A simple way to stay healthy

Hand-washing offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Adopting this habit can play a major role in protecting your health.”²

“Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, personal hygiene (such as handwashing, dental hygiene and ear care), physical fitness, emotions and social relationships, is integral to children’s wellbeing and self-confidence.”³

“What are the recommendations for keeping hands clean without triggering and/or exacerbating my eczema? Does soap need to be antibacterial?”

Regular handwashing is the most important way to minimise the risk of contracting and spreading infection.

- *This means a thorough wash with a gentle cleanser for at least 20 seconds, including tops and palms of the hands, wrists and between the fingers and around your nails.*
- *Warm water is fine – hot water offers no advantage and can aggravate eczema.*
- *After washing and rinsing well - hands should be patted dry (not rubbed) and a good moisturiser (emollient) applied.*
- *An antibacterial soap is not necessary and soap-free cleansers can be used.*
- *That said, frequent handwashing will dry out the skin and strip the natural oils, which can cause eczema to flare.*

To ease the discomfort:

- *Select a cleanser for sensitive skin. Emulsifying ointment or aqueous cream for use as a soap substitute can be obtained on prescription if they have to be used in large quantities or over the counter from your pharmacist at a relatively low cost.*
- *Moisturise after each washing. Moisturisers (emollients) are an essential part of treating hand dermatitis and should be applied generously after handwashing, repeatedly through the day and whenever skin feels dry.*
- *You may find overnight moisturising treatments beneficial. Apply a generous layer of moisturiser just before you go to bed, then put on a pair of clean cotton gloves and leave overnight.*
- *Protect your hands when you can with the use of barrier creams or by wearing gloves. If the condition of the skin is severe you may wish to combine both. Avoid wearing gloves for long periods of time (longer than 20 minutes) as this can cause the hands to sweat, causing more irritation and itching.”⁴*

IMPLEMENTATION

To promote and enable effective hand washing our service will ensure that;

- Hand basins are readily accessible and located where they will be needed (including toilets, food preparation areas and outdoors); and
- Hand basins are available at an appropriate size and height, for educators and children; and
- Liquid soap dispensers will be used reducing the opportunities for cross contamination
- Disposable paper towels or single use washers are preferred for drying hands

² “Handwashing Do’s and Don’ts, Mayo Clinic” (accessed on-line April 2020)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hand-washing/HQ00407>

³ “Guide to the National Quality Framework” Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority Jan 2020

⁴ “COVID-19 Coronavirus FAQ for people with eczema” The Australian College of Dermatologists (accessed on-line April 2020)

https://www.eczema.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19_Information-for-people-with-eczema-30-March-2020.pdf

- National Health and Medical Research Centre (NHMRC) Posters are to be displayed next to all handwashing facilities and other suitable locations;
 - POSTER “How to Wash Hands” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
 - POSTER “How to use Alcohol-based Hand Rub” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
 - POSTER “The Role of Hands in the Spread of Infection” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
 - POSTER “The Chain of Infection” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012. The provision of “waterless” products are available to encourage effective handwashing in locations where water is not convenient
- Educators should find many opportunities to discuss handwashing with children both incidentally and through programmed activities.
- Children should not be rushed to wash hands, instead allowed time to thoroughly wash and dry hands.
- Educators should ensure that transition times are relaxed and unhurried.
- Information is provided to families to assist them in both understanding and promoting effective handwashing.

Educators and other adults (including families and visitors) should wash their hands;

BEFORE	AFTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Starting work, so germs are not introduced into the service ● Eating or handling food ● Giving medication ● Putting on gloves ● Applying sunscreen or other lotions to one or more children ● Going home, so germs are not taken home with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taking off gloves ● Changing a nappy ● Cleaning the nappy change area ● Using the toilet and helping children use the toilet ● Coming in from outside play ● Wiping a child’s nose or your own nose ● Eating or handling food Handling garbage ● Cleaning up faeces, vomit or blood ● Applying sunscreen or other lotions to one or more children ● Touching animals

When to wash the children’s hands:

BEFORE	AFTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Starting the day at the service; parents can help with this ● Eating or handling food ● Going home, so germs are not taken home with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eating or handling food ● Touching nose secretions ● Using the toilet ● Having their nappy changed—their hands will become contaminated while they are on the change mat ● Coming in from outside play ● Touching animals

Adults and children should also wash hands whenever hands feel dirty or are visibly soiled

In addition to washing hands when coming in from outside, adults and children are encouraged to wash hands **prior** to going outside. Adults and children are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub before and after playing in the sandpit where practicable.

Handwashing Method

The process of thoroughly washing, rinsing and drying your hands or a child's hands should take around 30 seconds. There are five steps to washing hands:

1. Wet hands with running water (preferably warm water, for comfort).
2. Apply soap to hands.
3. Lather soap and rub hands thoroughly, including the wrists, the palms, between the fingers, around the thumbs and under the nails. Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds (for about as long as it takes to sing 'Happy birthday' once).
4. Rinse thoroughly under running water.
5. Dry thoroughly preferably using disposable paper towel

How to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

- Hand rub used at our service should contain 60–80% alcohol as recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council
- After several uses of an alcohol-based hand cleaner, you should wash your hands properly with liquid soap and water.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitisers must be kept out of reach of children and out of direct heat.
- Children using alcohol-based hand rub must be supervised
- If hands are visibly dirty they should be washed with soap and water or wiped clean first.
- A hand rub should take 20-30 seconds or until hands are dry
- There are three steps to using alcohol-based hand rub:
 1. Apply the amount of hand rub recommended by the manufacturer to palms of dry hands.
 2. Rub hands together, making sure you cover in between fingers, around thumbs and under nails.
 3. Rub until hands are dry.

Skin reactions

- If educators or children develop reactions to soap products supplied by the centre they should report this to the Nominated Supervisor. Consideration will be given to substitution products, these must be in the form of liquid or foam dispensers.
- The application of hand creams and using powder-free gloves may help to prevent skin cracking and dermatitis.
- Helpful tips for handwashing for those with Eczema
 - Try a hand sanitiser for sensitive skin which is quite mild on the hands
 - Use a mild soap free cleanser with a damp face washer or water wipes
 - Try using a moisturiser to wash with if needed which helps offset the damage and dryness from water
 - Use emulsifying ointment or aqueous cream as a soap substitute which can be obtained on prescription
 - Protect your hands with barrier cream and/or gloves
 - Consult your local Pharmacist and always patch test anything new first!
 - Consult your GP or dermatologist if your hands are dry, red, cracked or itchy – you may need some extra help.

Educators should encourage parents and other visitors to wash their hands or use sanitiser upon entering and leaving the service.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

- Handwashing posters will be displayed at all handwashing facilities
- Educator will be provided with the NHMRC Handwashing Poster as part of the induction pack.
- Educators and families will have access to this policy at all times.
- Educators and families will be provided with opportunities to be involved in the review of this policy.

RELATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

- POSTER “How to Wash Hands” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
- POSTER “How to use Alcohol-based Hand Rub” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
- POSTER “The Role of Hands in the Spread of Infection” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
- POSTER “The Chain of Infection” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
- “Infection Prevention and Control in Education and Care Services – Information for Families” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
- Educator Induction Checklist
- Health and Hygiene Policy
- Recruitment, Selection and Employment Policy

SCOPE AND ENFORCEMENT

The failure of any person to comply with this policy in its entirety may lead to;

- Termination of child enrolment
- Performance management of an employee which may lead to termination

RECOGNISED AUTHORITIES AND DOCUMENTS WHICH GUIDE POLICY

- “5th Edition Staying Healthy Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services” Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council 2012 (updated June 2013)
- “Handwashing Do’s and Don’ts, Mayo Clinic” (accessed on-line April 2020)
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hand-washing/HQ00407>
- “Infection Prevention and Control in Education and Care Services – Information for Families” NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2013
- “Guide to the National Quality Framework” Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority Jan 2020
- Eczema Association Australasia website (accessed online April 2020)
<https://www.eczema.org.au/hand-washing/>
- “COVID-19 Coronavirus FAQ for people with eczema” The Australian College of Dermatologists (accessed on-line April 2020)
https://www.eczema.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19_Information-for-people-with-eczema-30-March-2020.pdf

DATE CREATED: November 2011**REVIEW DETAILS:**

Review Date	Details of Changes
January 2013	No changes made, sources updated where applicable. Awaiting release of Staying Healthy in Childcare edition 5
March 2013	This policy has been updated with current information from <i>"5th Edition Staying Healthy Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services"</i> Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council 2012. It is recommended that this policy is re-issued to all educators to ensure they are aware of updated responsibilities. Inclusion of updated posters; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● POSTER "How to Wash Hands" NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012 ● POSTER "How to use Alcohol-based Hand Rub" NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012 ● POSTER "The Role of Hands in the Spread of Infection" NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012 ● POSTER "The Chain of Infection" NHMRC Staying Healthy 5th Editions 2012
January 2014	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
May 2015	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
January 2016	Staying Healthy edition 5 updated to June 2013 version and change to washing hands with babies unable to stand at a small hand basin, previously it listed rinsing hands after using a disposable wipe in the draft edition, this was changed to remove the rinsing and just dry after a wipe as per recommendations in Staying Healthy Edition 5 updated version.
April 2016	No changes, sources updated as applicable
May 2017	Sources updated, no changes.
April 2018	Sources updated and additional quotes in rationale including from 2018 Guide to the National Quality Framework Included in Implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disposable paper towels or single use washers are preferred for drying hands ● Children should not be rushed to wash hands, instead allowed time to thoroughly wash and dry hands. ● Educators should ensure that transition times are relaxed and unhurried.
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated sources.
April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated sources ● Removed sorbolene as a suitable handwashing product instead of soap for those with eczema – alternative steps provided from the Eczema Association Australasia in both Rationale and Implementation