

Infection Control Guidelines

Handwashing

Most experts agree that the single most effective practice that prevents the spread of germs is good handwashing by providers and others. Some activities in particular expose everyone to germs or the opportunity to spread them. You can stop the spread of germs by washing your hands and teaching the children in your care good handwashing practices.

When Hands Should Be Washed

- Upon arrival at work.
- Immediately before handling or preparing food or feeding others.
- After using the toilet, assisting a child in using the toilet, or changing diapers.
- After contacting body fluids, including wet or soiled diapers, runny noses, spit, vomit, etc.
- After handling pets, pet cages, or other pet objects.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty or after cleaning up.
- After removing gloves used for any purpose.*
- Before giving or applying medication or ointment.
- Before going home.

*If gloves are being used, hands should be washed immediately after gloves are removed even if hands are not visibly contaminated. Use of gloves alone will not prevent contamination of hands or spread of germs and should not be considered a substitute for handwashing.

How to Wash Hands

Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. Antibacterial soaps may be used, but are not required. Premoistened cleansing towelettes do not effectively clean hands and do not take the place of handwashing. Wet the hands and apply a small amount (dime to quarter size) of liquid soap to hands. Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears and continue for at least 15 seconds. Be sure to scrub between fingers, under fingernails, and around the tops and palms of the hands. Rubbing hands together under running water is the most important part of washing away infectious germs. Rinse hands under warm running water. Leave the water running while drying hands. Dry hands with a clean, disposable (or single use) towel, being careful to avoid touching the faucet handles or towel holder with clean hands. Turn the faucet off using the towel as a barrier between your hands and the faucet handle. Discard the used towel in a trash can lined with a fluid-resistant (plastic) bag. Trash cans with foot-pedal operated lids are preferable. Consider using hand lotion to prevent chapping of hands. If using lotions, use liquids or tubes that can be squirted so that the hands do not have direct contact with container spout. Direct contact with the spout could contaminate the lotion inside the container. 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 of the above steps and then wash your own hands.

Adapted from: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/abc/practic6.htm>

Cleaning and Disinfection

Keeping the environment clean and orderly is very important for health, safety, and the emotional well-being of everyone. One of the most important steps in reducing the number of germs, and therefore the spread of disease, is the thorough cleaning of surfaces that could possibly pose a risk to children or staff.

Routine cleaning with soap and water is the most useful method for removing germs from surfaces. Good mechanical cleaning (scrubbing with soap and water) physically reduces the numbers of germs from the surface, just as handwashing reduces the numbers of germs from the hands. Removing germs is especially important for soiled surfaces which cannot be treated with chemical disinfectants, such as some upholstery fabrics.

However, some items and surfaces should receive an additional step, disinfection, to kill germs after cleaning with soap and rinsing with clear water. Items that can be washed in a dishwasher or hot cycle of a washing machine do not have to be disinfected because these machines use water that is hot enough for a long enough period of time to kill most germs. The disinfection process uses chemicals that are stronger than soap and water. Disinfection also usually requires soaking or drenching the item for several minutes to give the chemical time to kill the remaining germs. Commercial products that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) standards for "hospital grade" germicides (solutions that kill germs) may be used for this purpose. One of the most commonly used chemicals for disinfection is a homemade solution of household bleach and water. Bleach is cheap and easy to get. The solution of bleach and water is easy to mix, is nontoxic, is safe if handled properly, and kills most infectious agents. (Be aware that some infectious agents are not killed by bleach. For example, cryptosporidia is only killed by ammonia or hydrogen peroxide.)

Adapted from: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/ABC/practic9.htm>