

Hand hygiene for children and carers

Teaching children good hand hygiene sets up lifelong habits to stop the spread of infection.

What is hand hygiene?

- Hand hygiene means keeping your hands clean.
- It means washing your hands with soap and water or rubbing them with sanitiser to remove the germs that cause infection or disease.
- Having clean hands helps prevent the spread of illnesses, such as the common cold, flu, COVID-19, gastro, and childhood illnesses.

Why is hand hygiene important for children?

Children's immune systems are not yet mature, which means they are more vulnerable to getting infections.

Germs can spread easily between children and their carers because children touch things, play with other children, and share toys.

You can encourage children to wash their hands by helping, supervising, and giving gentle reminders.

How should children do hand hygiene?

Children should wash their hands using soap and warm running water. This is the best way to get rid of germs and is cheap and easy to do.

Children can also safely use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available.



When should children do hand hygiene?

- **When arriving** at school or childcare
- **Whenever** their hands look dirty.

BEFORE

- Eating or touching food.

AFTER

- Eating or touching food
- Going to the toilet
- Blowing or wiping their nose
- Sneezing or coughing
- Touching animals
- Playing outdoors.

When should carers do hand hygiene?

- **Before and after** giving medications to a child
- **Whenever** their hands look dirty.

BEFORE

- Preparing or eating food
- Helping children with eating or drinking.

AFTER

- Changing a nappy or helping a child to the toilet
- Helping a child with wiping or blowing their nose
- Cleaning activities.

How to use hand sanitiser

1

apply

a small amount of sanitiser to the palm of your hand.



2

rub

the sanitiser all over your hands, including your fingers, thumbs and wrists.



3

Allow the sanitiser to dry



Safe use of hand sanitiser for children



- Always supervise young children when they are using alcohol-based hand sanitiser to prevent accidental swallowing.
- Hand sanitiser should be stored out of the reach of small children and placed at a suitable height to avoid splashes.

For more information

Visit the **National Hand Hygiene Initiative** at www.safetyandquality.gov.au/nhhi