

Having and encouraging good hygiene practices in early childhood is essential for reducing the risk of cross infection. Helping children to develop appropriate personal hygiene habits will become embedded as they grow and develop. It is important to work with families to ensure children follow simple hygiene rules by incorporating good hygiene methods in both the early childhood centre and home environment.

Purpose

Our Centre is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all educators, staff, volunteers, families, and children by providing a safe and healthy environment. Effective hand hygiene significantly reduces the risk of infection and is therefore of the utmost importance. We aim to implement specific hand washing hygiene practices regularly to minimise the risks associated with cross infection of viral and bacterial borne diseases.

Implementation

Infection can be spread through direct physical contact between people, airborne droplets from coughing and sneezing or from contact with surfaces and objects. Children come into contact with a number of other children and adults, toys, eating utensils, and equipment whilst being cared for in early education and care services. This high degree of physical contact with people and the environment creates a higher risk of children being exposed to and spreading infectious illnesses. Whilst it may not be possible for services to prevent the spread of all infections, we aim to create a hygienic environment to minimise the spread of diseases and infections.

Effective hand washing is a vital strategy in the prevention of spreading many infectious diseases. Research emphasises effective and frequent handwashing as the single most important way to reduce the spread of bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites that may infect educators, staff and children in early childhood services and in our general population.

Micro-organisms such as bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites are present on the hands at all times and live in the oil that is naturally produced on our hands. The use of soap or detergent and water remove most of these organisms and decreases the risk of cross infection.

Our Centre will adhere to National Regulation requirements, standards and guidelines to support the effectiveness of our hand washing policy. We aim to educate and encourage children to wash their hands frequently and effectively which will help to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases, adhering to guidelines provided in *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* and recommendations from the Department of Health- Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) to guide best practice.

To ensure the Greatest Level of Personal Hygiene our Centre will ensure:

- All employees, parents, children and visitors wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival to the Centre or, use the alcohol-based sanitiser under adult supervision
- Hands are thoroughly dried using hand towel and disposed of in the bin provided
- Disposable tissues are used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- Hands are washed following the use of tissues
- Hands are washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- Signage is provided to prompt visitors and children to wash their hands regularly and effectively when visiting our Centre.

Nominated Supervisors/Responsible person will:

- All staff wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds regularly throughout the day
- All staff wash their hands
 - Before and after eating and handling food
 - Before and after preparing bottles for infants



- Before and after applying sunscreen or other lotions to children
- After using the toilet
- After wiping a child's nose
- After blowing their own nose
- After helping children use the toilet
- After touching animals
- After cleaning high touch surfaces- (tables, light switches, door handles, computers, iPads)
- After cleaning or mopping floors
- After changing learning environments – rooms, indoor/outdoor
- Whenever their hands are visibly dirty (after gardening, mud play, and painting)
- Before leaving the Centre at the end of the day
- Educators and staff adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- Educators and staff wash hands before and after wearing disposable gloves when:
 - Nappy changing
 - Preparing food
 - Administering medication
 - Administering first aid
 - Cleaning spills- faeces, vomit or blood
 - Cleaning with disinfectant or chemicals
 - After handling garbage and/or contaminated materials (nappies and other waste products)

Educators will ensure:

- Children are explicitly taught the correct process of hand washing
- Children are carefully supervised when handwashing
- Children are reminded to wash their hands frequently throughout the day
- They model effective handwashing procedures
- The required equipment and resources are easily accessible and appropriate to use- liquid soap, running water, paper towel
- Information about routines and songs for hand washing are shared with families to encourage routines at home

We believe the hygiene practices of children being cared for should be as rigorous as those of staff and educators. Our environment supports the creation of appropriate healthy hygiene habits during early childhood to ensure lifelong healthy decisions and actions.

Strategies educators will use to encourage effective hand hygiene practice include:

- Talking about the importance of hand hygiene
- Talking about when hand washing is appropriate and why (in an age appropriate manner)
- Singing a song or reciting a poem/rap as a guide to how long it should take to wash hands (e.g. singing happy birthday twice is a sufficient time frame)
- Using a clear visual poster with step by step instructions
- Using positive language
- Encouraging and using positive reinforcement
- Ensuring equipment is accessible
- Providing clear simple routines
- Giving children sufficient time to practice and develop their skills
- Ensuring adequate supervision and assistance is available when required
- Use STEM opportunities to teach about germs and prevention (ie: pepper and soap experiment)



Hand Drying

Effective hand drying is just as important as comprehensive hand washing. Research states that wet hands can pick up and transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands. Drying hands thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off.

Our Centre provides children, staff, and educators with disposable paper towel/warm air dryers to ensure effective hand hygiene. Bins are provided with foot control lids to dispose of used paper towel.

Where possible, our Centres aims to find sustainable alternatives to paper towel that may harm the environment.

Hand Washing Procedure

- **Wet** hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap.
- **Rub** soap all over your hands
- **Rub** hands together for as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice or “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”
- Don’t forget the backs of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails
- **Rinse** the soap off your hands under running water
- **Dry** your hands using paper towel or under a hand dryer.

Alcohol-based Hand sanitiser

Where possible, staff will use soap and water to clean their hands however, if this is not possible and hands are not greasy or visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser may be used.

Hand sanitiser must be kept out of reach of children at all times as it can be very dangerous if swallowed.

Directions should be followed on how to use the sanitiser correctly. The effectiveness of an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to kill microorganisms or prevent their growth should be at least 60% alcohol.

As per National Regulations, a safety data sheet will be kept on file for any alcohol-based hand sanitiser used in the Centre.

Hand Sanitiser Procedure

- **Apply** liquid to the palm of one hand
- **Rub** it all over both hands until the sanitiser dries
- This takes about 20 seconds
- Be careful not to wipe the sanitizer off before it is dry.

Using Gloves

Appropriate use of gloves can also be part of effective hand hygiene. The table below shows when to use disposable gloves and when you could use reusable gloves.

Type of gloves	When to wear them	How to maintain them	Examples
Disposable Gloves	When there is a chance you may come in contact with body fluids, including faeces, urine, saliva, vomit or blood	No maintenance – use them once and throw them away; do not reuse	Changing nappies Managing cuts and abrasions Cleaning spills of body fluids.
Reusable Gloves	When cleaning the education and care centres. When preparing bleach solutions for use after cleaning surface.	Cleaning according to the manufacturer’s instructions Store dry between uses Replace when showing signs of wear.	General cleaning duties



Disposable Gloves

Disposable gloves should never be reused or washed for reuse. They must be thrown away as soon as you have finished the activity they requires gloves.

Always wash your hands before and after wearing disposable gloves. Wear gloves on both hands:

- When changing nappies—there are billions of germs in faeces and sometimes in urine;
- When cleaning up faeces, urine, blood, saliva or vomit, including when it is on clothes.

However, note that overuse of gloves can cause skin reactions and sensitivity.

It is important to remember that the outside of the glove is dirty and the inside of the glove is clean. Avoid touching the inside of a glove with the outside of another glove, and avoid touching bare skin or clean surfaces while wearing contaminated gloves.

How to remove disposable gloves

- Pinch the outside of one glove near the wrist and peel the glove off so it ends up inside out.
- Keep hold of the peeled-off glove in your gloved hand while you take off the other glove—put one or two fingers of your un-gloved hand inside the wrist of the other glove. Peel off the second glove from the inside, and over the first glove, so you end up with the two gloves inside out, one inside the other.
- Put the gloves in a plastic-lined, hands-free lidded rubbish bin, and wash your hands. If a hands-free lidded rubbish bin is not available, put the gloves in a bucket or container lined with a plastic bag, then tie up the bag and take it to the outside garbage bin.

Source: Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014). [Australian Government Department of Health Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\) Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics](#). (2016). Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017). Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020). National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*. Revised National Quality Standard. (2018). Safe Work Australia Victoria State Government Better Health Channel

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National Quality Standard – NQS		
Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
Education and Care Service National Regulations		
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices	
88	Infectious diseases	
93	Administration of medication	
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities	
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities	
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures	

