

## 7.8 (b) Hygiene Practices – Handwashing Policy

<b>Policy number:</b> 7.8 (b)
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This policy relates to	
Policies	7.9 Illness Exclusion & Infectious Diseases Policy 7.22 Cleaning and Maintaining Hygiene Policy
National Quality Standards Early Childhood Education & Care	2.1 Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted 2.1.2 Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices re promoted and implemented. 2.2 Each child is protected

### Purpose

Educators will minimise the spread and risks of infectious diseases between children, educators, family members and visitors by following the best practice handwashing guidelines and standards for children and themselves.

### Background

Good handwashing practices and hygiene can prevent the spread of infectious illnesses. When infection control procedures are followed, the spread of colds in children under 24 months of age can be reduced by 17% and a 66% reduction of diarrhoea in children over 24 months.

Educators and children in care are at increased risk of many infectious diseases, particularly respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases, but also potentially serious diseases such as Hepatitis A and CMV. Washing hands by educators and children regularly and in certain situations significantly reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. Toileting and handwashing facilities must be safe, regularly cleaned and appropriate for the number and ages of children in care.

### Policy

#### Facilities

Hand washing facilities should consist of a wash basin with running water, liquid soap dispenser and paper towels.

## **Procedure**

### ***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.

Hand washing should take 15 seconds using liquid soap and warm running water. All surfaces of the hands should be cleaned, lathering vigorously front, back, and sides of the hands, wrists, between the fingers and under the nails. Count to ten as hands are washed and rinsed. Dry hands with individual paper towel and discard in bin.

Steps to correctly washing hands:

- (1) Wet hands under running water;
- (2) Soap hands (using a soap on tap), lather well;
- (3) Rub thoroughly, including the wrists and between the fingers;
- (4) Rinse in clean running water.
- (5) Dry thoroughly on clean paper towel, leaving no moisture on the hands.

### ***Alcohol-Based Hand Rubs***

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.

It is important to remember that soap and water are the best option when your hands are visibly dirty. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also known as antiseptic hand rubs, waterless hand cleaner, 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.

### ***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 (and children's hands) thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off. Paper towel should be used for drying hands. If an educator prefers not to use paper towels, they can use single use hand towels which should be washed after each use. Re-useable hand towels must be hung in a way that prevents them touching, and the educator must ensure that the children only use their own hand towel.

## **Children**

Children should be taught to wash their hands in this way as part of the daily routine. It is recommended that children be encouraged by incorporating songs and rhymes into transition activities that involve handwashing, including posters and signs which show good hygiene practice, and talking to children about the reasons why handwashing is important. Educators are encouraged to support children to develop handwashing skills through encouragement for their efforts while carefully supervising children who are still gaining skills.

Children should always wash hands:

- Before eating;
- After going to the toilet, or having their nappy changed;
- After touching nose secretions or sores.
- After playing outside;
- After handling pets or other animals;
- After messy play experiences.

Handwashing should take place in a separate location to food or drink preparation, rinsing of soiled clothing, or cleaning of potty-chairs. Kitchen sinks should not be used for hand washing.

## **Infants Under 12 Months**

Babies need to wash their hands as often and as thoroughly as older children. If the baby is able to stand at an appropriate sized basin, educators need to wash and dry their hands. If the baby is unable to stand at a hand basin, wash their hands with either pre-moistened towelettes or wet disposable cloths, and then pat dry with paper towels.

If educators prefer, handwashing of infants under 12 months may occur using diluted liquid soap and individual hand washers. Washers are to be used only once.

## **Adults**

Adults should always wash hands:

- Before preparing food or infant formula;
- Before eating or feeding a child;
- After toileting yourself or a child.
- Before and after changing nappies or children's underpants;
- Before and after giving medication or first aid;

- After wiping a child's nose, or sneezing or blowing own nose;
- After cleaning up faeces, vomit or any bodily fluid;
- After handling pets or other animals;
- After handling raw food and garbage.

### **Washing hands before and after wearing gloves**

It is recommended to 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.

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.

Educators have the option of implementing further infection control measures in encouraging children to wash their hands on arrival and departure at their home and turning off taps using a paper towel.

### **Relevant Legislation**

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010  
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

### **Key Resources**

Germ Busters Early Childhood Kit and Hand Hygiene Fact Sheet (2009)

[www.health.qld.gov.au/germbusters/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/germbusters/)

National Health and Medical Research Council: (2006) Staying Healthy in Child Care - Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

[www.nhmrc.gov.au/](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/)

[www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch43](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch43)

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### **Related Policies**

[Appendix H Safe Work Practice](#)

[Appendix I Child Protection](#)