

Hand Washing Policy

This policy was reviewed in August, 2022.

Having and encouraging good hygiene practices in early childhood is essential for reducing the risk of 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 strategies in both the service and home environment.

Quality area 2: Children's Health and Safety

2.1 Health - Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.

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

Purpose

Our Service 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.

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors to the Service.

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 in to contact with a number of other children and adults, toys, eating utensils, and equipment whilst being cared for in early childhood education and care services. The 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 hand washing 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 removes most of these organisms and decreases the risk of cross infection.

Our Service 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 by '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 Service will ensure:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival to the service or, use the alcohol based hand sanitiser under the adult supervision.
- Hands are thoroughly dried using paper hand towel and disposed of in the bins provided, or by using the hand dryer
- hands are washed after using tissues
- hands are washed thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet
- signage is displayed to prompt visitors, staff and children to use hand sanitiser or wash hands regularly and effectively when at the service

Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person will ensure:

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 baby bottles
- before and after applying sunscreen or other lotions to children
- after using the toilet
- after wiping a child's nose
- after helping children with toilet routines and nappy changes
- 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 hands are visibly dirty (after mud play, painting, gardening)
- before leaving the service 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 using disposable gloves when: nappy changing, preparing food, administering medication, administering first aid, cleaning spills-faeces, urine, vomit or blood, cleaning with chemicals or disinfectant, after handling garbage and/or contaminated materials (nappies and other waste products)

Educators will ensure:

- children are taught the correct process of hand washing
- children are supervised when washing hands
- children are reminded to wash their hands during the day
- they model effective hand washing procedures
- the required equipment and resources are easily accessible 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

Strategies educators use to encourage effective 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 a poem as a guide to how long it should take to wash hands (eg. happy birthday twice)
- using a 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

Hand Drying

Effective hand drying is just as important as 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 service provides disposable paper towel/hand dryer to ensure effective hand drying. Bins are provided to dispose of used paper towel.

Hand washing procedure:

WET hands with water, turn off tap

RUB soap all over hands, and rub hands together for as long as it take to sing Happy Birthday, twice. Don't forget back of hands, between fingers and under fingernails.

RINSE off soap using running water

DRY hands using paper towel/hand dryer

Alcohol based hand sanitiser:

If it is not possible to use soap and water, an alcohol based hand sanitiser may be used (only if hands are not visibly dirty or greasy) The effectiveness of alcohol based hand sanitiser to kill microorganisms or prevent their growth should be at least 60% alcohol.

Hand sanitiser procedure:

APPLY liquid to palm of one hand

RUB it all over both hands until the sanitiser dries. This takes about 20 seconds. Be careful not to wipe it off before it properly dries.

Related information/Resources:

Childcare desktop
Department of Health

Source:

AHPPC

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics (2016)

Guide to the Education and Care services National Law and Regulations

Guide to the National Quality Standard (2020)

National Health and Medical research

Safe Work Australia