

HANDWASHING POLICY

Rationale and Policy Considerations

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.

Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (SA)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Privacy Act (1988) Commonwealth

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations 77, 88, 93, 106, 109, 168

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education Elements 2.1, 2.1.2, 2.2, 2.2.1

Policy Statement

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.

Strategies for Policy 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 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 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 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 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 Service.

A 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 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, painting)
 - 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 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 Service 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.

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 Service.

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.

Related information / Resources

Be a Soapy Hero! <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/soapy-hero>

Child Care Centre Desktop- Handwashing posters

Department of Health [Good Hygiene is in your hands](#)

Play School [Hello Friends! \(A COVID-19 Special\)](#)

[Teaching washing your hands with pepper experiment](#)

The Wiggles: [The Handwashing Song](#)

Links to other Policies

Administration of Medication Policy

Animal and Pet Policy

Control of Infectious Disease Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Infant Bottle Safety & Preparation Policy

Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy

Nappy Change and Toileting Policy

Pregnancy in Early Childhood Policy

Sick Children Policy

Supervision Policy

Work Health and Safety Policy

Sourced from

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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