

# Children's Handwashing

**Child Care Learning Centers: 591-1-1-.17(7)** - Handwashing, Children. Children's hands shall be washed with liquid soap and warm running water:

- (a) Immediately upon arrival for care, when moving from one child care group to another, and upon re-entering the child care area after outside play;
- (b) Before and after eating meals and snacks, handling or touching food, or playing in water;
- (c) After toileting and diapering, playing in sand, touching animals or pets, and contact with bodily fluids such as, but not limited to, mucus, saliva, vomit or blood;
- (d) After contamination by any other means; and
- (e) Washcloth handwashing is permitted for infants when the infant is too heavy to hold for handwashing or cannot stand safely to wash hands at a sink and for children with special needs who are not capable of washing their own hands. An individual washcloth shall be used only once for each child before laundering.

**Family Child Care Learning Homes: 290-2-3-.11(1)(k)** - Children's hands shall be washed with liquid soap and warm running water:

1. Immediately upon arrival for the day and re-entering the child care area after outside play;
2. Before and after eating meals and snacks, handling or touching food, and playing in water;
3. After toileting and diapering, playing in sand, touching animals or pets, contact with bodily fluids such as, but not limited to, mucus, saliva, vomit or blood, and after contamination by any other means; and
4. Washcloth handwashing is permitted for infants when the infant is too heavy to hold for handwashing or cannot stand safely to wash hands at a sink and for children with special needs who are not capable of washing their own hands. An individual washcloth shall be used only once for each child before laundering.

## **Rule Type:**

**Core Rule:** Child Care Learning Center

**Non-Core Rule:** Family Child Care Learning Home

## **Intent of the Rule**

To prevent the spread of infection and to teach children safe and healthy hygiene practices. To accommodate the needs and developmental skills of very young children and children with special needs.

## **Clarification**

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), handwashing is the simplest and most important basic measure for preventing the spread of infection in child care facilities. The AAP recommends that a written reminder of the handwashing policy be posted at each sink (used by adults and/or children). Handwashing requirements apply to diapered children and to non-diapered children. If a child is asleep when he/she arrives at the center, staff do not need to wake the child to wash his/her hands, but the child's hands should be washed as soon as the child awakens.

Many studies have shown that unwashed or improperly washed hands are the primary carriers of infection. When children wash their hands at the proper times and with the proper technique, the amount of illness in child care can be drastically reduced. Children should first wet their hands using comfortably warm, running water (between 60 and 120 degrees Fahrenheit), then thoroughly lather their hands with soap for at least twenty seconds to remove organisms such as virus-containing particles and bacteria. Hands should then be rinsed and dried with a disposable

or single-use towel. Caregivers should teach children how to wash their hands and then monitor children's hand hygiene practices. They should also help children as needed depending on their developmental levels.

Bar soap is often left sitting in a pool of water, especially when many people use it frequently. A soap bar, which is always wet, is a good place for germs to grow and multiply. Since these germs could spread when others use the soap, liquid soap must be used instead. Hand sanitizer should not be used in place of soap and water handwashing.

Washcloths should be used for handwashing only as specified in the rule. It is acceptable to use individual washcloths to wipe children's faces, arms and legs regardless of the age of the child. An individual washcloth means one that has been laundered after each use and not shared among children.

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## Indicators

- ✓ Children must wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water.
  - Note: Liquid soap is more effective than bar soap in limiting the transmission of bacteria; therefore, liquid soap must be used per the rule.
  - Reminder: Liquid soap should be safe for children (i.e., free of a warning to *keep out of reach of children*) and placed within children's reach during handwashing activities. This fosters independence and allows children to practice their self-help skills. Liquid hand soap with a warning label must be kept out of children's reach when not in use.
  - TIP: Have staff sing a song with children as they wash their hands to ensure hands are washed for 20 seconds.
  
- ✓ Children must wash their hands at the following times:
  - ❖ Immediately upon arriving for care, when moving from one child care group to another, and upon re-entering the child care area after outside play;
  - ❖ Before and after eating meals and snacks, handling or touching food, or playing in water;
  - ❖ After toileting and diapering, playing in the sand, touching animals or pets, and contact with bodily fluids such as, but not limited to, mucus, saliva, vomit or blood;
  - ❖ After contamination by any other means.
    - TIP: Post a copy of DECAL's handwashing poster at all sinks used by children to serve as a visual reminder of proper handwashing techniques. DECAL's handwashing poster can be found on Bright from the Start's website at: <http://www.decals.ga.gov/documents/attachments/HandwashingChart.pdf>
    - Recommendation: Since clean hands can become re-contaminated when used to turn off the faucet, staff should instruct children to turn off the faucet with the same paper towel used to dry their hands.
    - Note: Plan transition times before meals so that children are seated at the table and fed immediately after their hands are washed. After handwashing and before food is served, children should not be allowed to return to play, to handle toys or books at the table, or to sit on the floor because these activities can re-contaminate their hands.

- ✓ Washcloths must be used for handwashing only when an infant is too heavy to hold or cannot stand safely to wash their hands at a sink and for children with special needs who are not capable of washing their own hands.
  - Note: An individual washcloth must be used only once for each child before laundering.
  - TIP: Disposable wipes, paper towels, or other single-use towels may be used in place of a washcloth.
  - Reminder: Soiled washcloths must be placed in a covered container that is waterproof or equipped with a leakproof liner. The contents of the container must be inaccessible to children at all times.

## **Resources:**

Caring for Our Children, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org>