



Hand Washing

Children's Services Policy No 2.8

Date issued:	June 2008
Replaces issue/policy:	Health and Hygiene
Date effective:	June 2008
Date Reviewed:	August 2010, January 2012, October 2014, April 2015, May 2019; October 2020, January 2023; and June 2025

Aim

To establish practices that minimise the spread of infection and the risks associated with infectious diseases.

Background information

Staff working within Children's Services are at an increased risk of infectious diseases.

Infections can be spread by an adult/child who shows no signs of illness particularly respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases. Regular effective washing of hands (children, staff, parents/carers and visitors) significantly reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases.

Relevant legislation

- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Education and Care National Regulations Amendment Regulations 2025](#)
- [Public Health Amendment \(Review\) Act 2017](#)
- [NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#)
- [NSW Public Health Regulation 2012](#)
- [NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Children \(Education and Care Services\) National Law \(NSW\)](#)
- [NSW Public Health Act 2010](#)
- [Food Act 2003](#)

Resources

- [Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#), (6th Edition) National Health and Medical Research Council (2024)
- Australian Government, Department of Health, Disability and Aging - [Food standards and safety](#)
- NSW Food Authority - [Children's Services](#)
- NSW Health – [Hand Washing](#)
- NSW Health – [Hygiene at Home](#)
- Australian Government, Department of Health – [Infection Control in Child Care Settings](#)
- World Health Organization – [Hand Hygiene: Why, How and When?](#)
- HealthDirect – [Hand Washing](#)
- Care for Kids - [Hygiene and Safety Standards in Child Care](#)
- [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard](#) –
 - **Quality Area 2:**
 - Element 2.1.2

Note: In this policy "staff" and "educators" refers to staff employed by Willoughby City Council.

Practices

Why wash our hands?

Effective washing of hands is one of the most important ways of preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Washing hands loosens, dilutes and washes off germs and contaminants. Regular effective washing of both staff and children's hands significantly reduces the risk of transmission of infection diseases.

When to wash your hands - staff

- On arrival at the service - this reduces the introduction of germs.
- Before and after eating or handling food, including babies' bottles. The wearing of gloves is optional.
- Before preparing or the cooking of food.
- Before and after changing a nappy, or checking a nappy to see if it is soiled.
- After removing gloves.
- After going to the toilet.
- After having any contact with urine, faeces, vomit, blood or other bodily fluids.
- After giving first aid or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR – must wear gloves if administering CPR).
- After wiping a nose (child's or your own) or after having contact with nasal or salivary secretions. It is optional to wear gloves.
- Before and after giving a child medication, (it is recommended that staff wear gloves).
- After handling garbage.
- After playing outside, in a sandpit or water trough.
- After patting or touching animals or pets (including fish, birds and reptiles).
- Before and after each application of sunscreen.
- After cleaning.
- Before leaving the service (this prevents taking germs home).

When to wash the children's hands

- When they arrive at the service this reduces the introduction of germs (parents/carers can assist with this).
- Before and after eating and any handling of food, including cooking activities
- After having their nappy changed, as their hands may become contaminated while they are on the change mat.
- After going to the toilet.
- After playing outside.
- After contact with nasal or salivary secretions.
- After coming in contact with urine, faeces, vomit, blood or other bodily fluids.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to wash their hands on arrival and departure of the service.

How to wash our hands?

The process of thoroughly washing, rinsing and drying of hands should take around 30 seconds.

There are 5 steps to washing hands:

1. Wet hands with running warm water.
2. Apply soap to hands.
3. Lather soap and rub hands thoroughly, including the wrists, the palms, between the fingers, around the thumbs and under the nails. If you wear rings or other jewellery in your hands, move the jewellery around your finger while you rub to ensure that the area underneath the jewellery is clean. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds (for about as long as it takes to sing 'Happy birthday' twice).
4. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
5. Dry hands thoroughly.

Please also refer to '[How to wash hands](#)' poster – Staying Healthy in Childcare, 2013 attached to policy. NSW Health – [Hand Washing](#).

Staff need to supervise, observe and guide children to ensure they develop effective hand washing habits.

Staff will assist younger children and children with additional needs to stand at an appropriately sized hand basin to wash their hands.

If a younger child or child with additional needs is unable to stand at a hand basin, wash their hands with either pre-moistened wipes or wet disposable cloths, and then pat dry thoroughly.

If the infant can stand at a small hand basin, wash their hands the same way you wash your own hands.

If the infant cannot stand at a hand basin, wash their hands with pre-moistened disposable wipes, then dry thoroughly.

Supplies required

- Age appropriate hand washing facilities.
- Liquid soap including washable or replaceable liquid soap bottles. Containers used for liquid soap must be cleaned and dried before refilling with fresh soap.
- Disposable paper towel or automatic hand-dryer. Cloth towels should not be used as they allow re-contamination of the hands.
- Waste bin – should be hands free (foot pedal) to avoid contamination.
- Moisturising lotion or sorbolene cream for staff to use after handwashing. Application of a hand cream may help to prevent skin cracking and dermatitis.
- A waterproofed visual poster of hand-washing procedure above all hand washing basins.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaner. These have a role if proper hand washing facilities are not available (e.g. on excursions/outside environment). After several uses of an alcohol-based hand cleaner, you will need to wash your hands properly with liquid soap and water.

Soap alternatives

- Sorbolene cream and water may be used instead of soap and water. Staff and children with sensitive skin e.g. eczema may have skin that is easily inflamed, gets itchy and is made worse by rubbing and scratching. These staff/children may find that frequent use of soap and water may irritate their skin. They can use sorbolene cream instead of soap. They can put the cream on and then gently rub off under running water. They should pat their hands dry rather than rub and apply more sorbolene cream if needed.

- Alcohol-based hand rubs (also known as antiseptic hand rubs, waterless hand cleaners, gels or hand sanitisers) have been proven to increase hand hygiene in healthcare settings, and thus are acceptable in education and care services.
- Alcohol-based hand rubs are useful when performing multiple tasks in which hands can potentially become contaminated, e.g. when on excursions, when assisting children with eating or in other situations where soap and water are not always available, e.g. in the playground.
- Alcohol-based hand rubs should NOT replace washing hands with soap and running water where possible.

Gloves

Wearing gloves does not replace the need for hand washing as gloves may have very small holes or be torn during use. Hands may also become contaminated during removal of gloves. New gloves must be used for each child and/or use with proper hand washing to follow.

Refer to Policy 2.7 - Infection Control Minimise Spread of Infectious Diseases and Exclusion for further information on glove use.

How to Wash hands

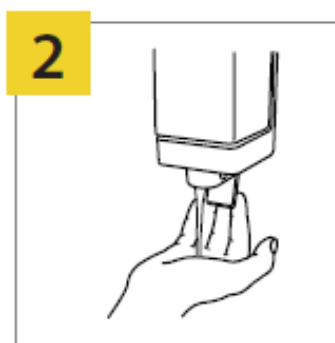
STAYING HEALTHY | 5TH EDITION | 2013



A hand wash should take around 30 seconds.



Wet hands with running water (preferably warm, for comfort).



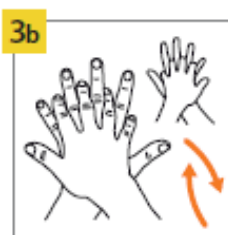
Apply soap to hands.



Lather soap and rub hands for at least 15 seconds, including:



palm to palm,



back of hands,



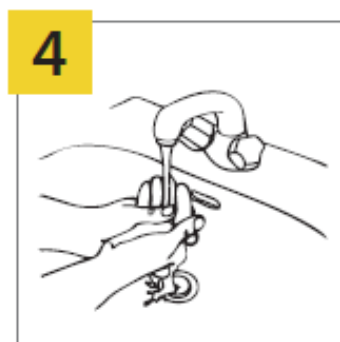
in between fingers and back of fingers,



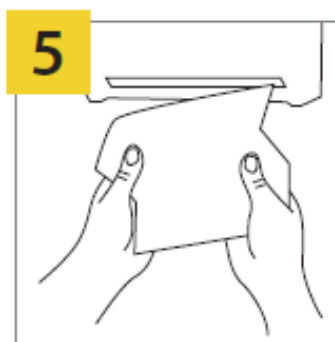
around thumbs and



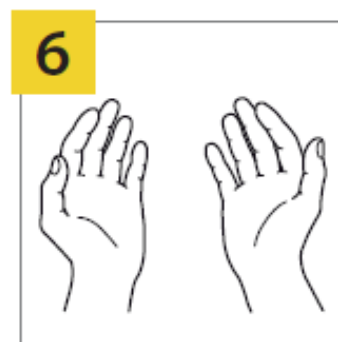
tips of fingers.



Rinse hands with water.



Dry hands thoroughly.



Your hands are clean.

THIS POSTER REFERENCES THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S 'HOW TO HANDWASH?' POSTER NHMRC Ref. CH55g Printed June 2013



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