

Preventing the Spread of Germs



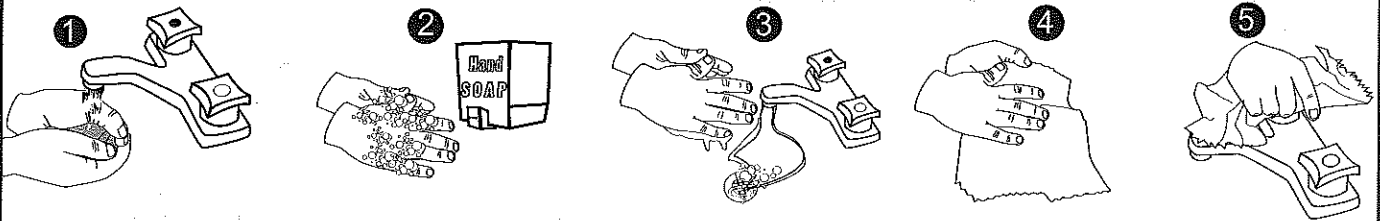
Colds, the flu, and other communicable diseases seem to go along with having children. It's upsetting and worrisome to hear your child say, "I don't feel good."

In our health lessons, your child has been learning about diseases that can be "caught." He or she has learned about germs and how they spread from one person to another. He or she also knows how to reduce the spread of germs.

- Cover sneezes or coughs with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve.
- Wash your hands often.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Don't share food you have touched, eating utensils, cups, or personal care items with others.
- Have an adult clean any cuts or scrapes.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands.

If your child does these six things, maybe you won't hear, "I don't feel good" as often. Let's work together to remind children of these health habits and reward them when they practice these habits.

G-E-R-M-S: Steps for Washing Away the Dirt and Germs



Here are the five steps to proper hand washing your child has learned. Try counting them off on your hand or spelling the word "germs" as your child follows each step.

five steps

Step One: **G**et your hands wet while the water is running.

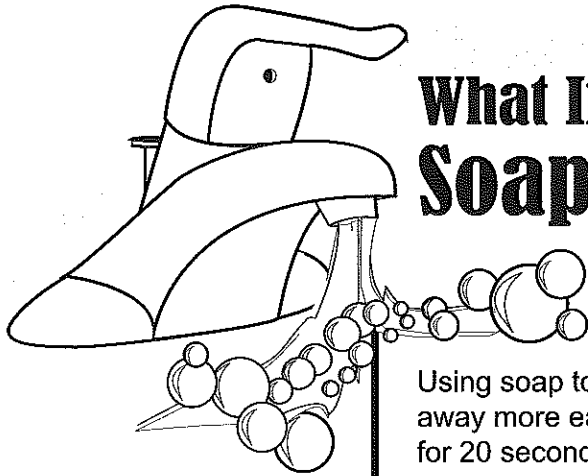
Step Two: **E**nergetically, use soap and rub your hands together. Work up a good lather. Wash vigorously for 18 to 20 seconds. Be sure to wash wrists, back of hands, between fingers, and under fingernails. A good way to make sure you wash long enough is to count to 20 or hum a short song twice, such as *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* or *Happy Birthday*.

Step Three: **R**inse your hands and let the water drip into the sink.

Step Four: **M**ake sure you dry your hands with an individual towel or paper towel.

Step Five: **S**hut off the faucet handle with the used towel.

It's best to open the door of the bathroom with the used towel. Then, throw it away.



What If You Don't Have Soap or Hot Water?

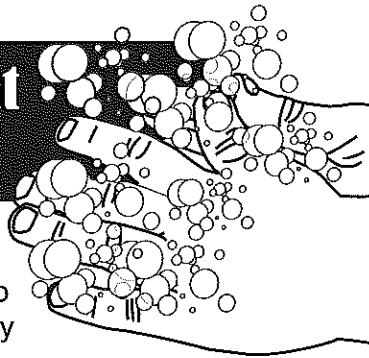
Using soap to wash hands helps dirt and germs dissolve and rinse away more easily. If soap is not available, use friction and running water for 20 seconds to help clean hands. Water should be a comfortable temperature. Water that is hot enough to kill germs would burn your skin.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are great to use when water is not available, such as when you are riding in a car or at the park. In order for hand sanitizers to work, they must contain at least 60% alcohol. So, you need to help your child use a hand sanitizer. Avoid leaving the bottle out where a child can get to it without your help. The bottles note that the sanitizer should be kept out of the reach of children just like any other poison.

When Is It Important to Wash Hands?

Try to make frequent hand washing a habit for your child. Encourage family members to remind each other to wash hands, especially at these times:

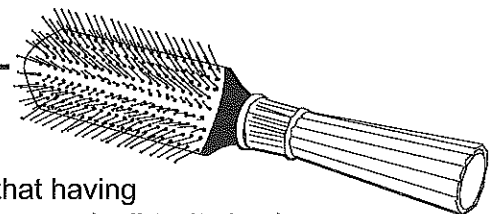
- before and after eating
- after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- before and after preparing food
- before and after going to the bathroom
- before and after contact with someone who is sick or large groups of people



Visit the CDC website for more information. You can download a brochure from their "Ounce of Prevention" campaign!

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/op/

Talking With Your Child About Lice



Remind your child that "communicable" means that one person can pass on germs or a disease to another. Explain that head lice are tiny bugs that like to live in people's hair. They are like germs because they are communicable, which means they can travel from one person to another.

Reassure your child that having lice doesn't mean someone is dirty. It simply means the person was near someone who had lice. Explain that lice move from one person to another on personal items, such as hats, scarves, and brushes. Lice can be gotten rid of with special shampoos, combs, and cleaning of personal items.

When to Keep Children Home From School



Our children play and work close to each other for several hours each day. They are around many disease-causing germs. It is easy for illness to quickly spread through a class. Good hand washing habits are encouraged at school. We also clean the surfaces your child touches often. By doing these things, we should be able to cut down the spread of illness in school.

It's sometimes hard to know when to keep children home from school. The following is a list of signs and symptoms that might mean a child is ill. These signs also mean that a child could spread that illness to other classmates.

Fever: A person's normal temperature is 98.6 degrees. Anything higher means your child should stay home. Fever usually means infection. Infections may be spread to others. A fever may be at its lowest first thing in the morning and rise as the day goes along. Make sure your child is completely well before sending him or her back to school after a fever.

Rash: Keep your child home unless you are sure the rash is an allergic rash, such as poison ivy. A rash may be a sign of any number of diseases that can be spread easily.

Vomiting: Healthy children don't throw up. Be sure your child has fully recovered from whatever illness has caused the vomiting before he or she goes back to school. After vomiting, your child should be able to keep down clear liquids and then, a light meal. Allow a few hours. Then, if your child is still able to eat, he or she should be able to return to school.

Runny Nose: A nose which runs clear, watery liquid may be due to allergies. This is not "catching." A nose that has a thick, colored (yellow, green, or brown) discharge means there could be an infection. The child should be kept home until it clears. It should help to give the child a lot to drink and a decongestant.

Cough: A cough that lingers and/or is deep should be considered contagious. Your child should be kept home.

Sore Throat: If your child has a fever, a cough, or thick drainage from his or her nose along with a sore throat, he or she should stay home. If the sore throat stays for more than a day or two, your child should be kept home.

Reddened Eyes: A child with a white, thick drainage should be kept home until treatment has begun. This may go along with redness in the white of the eye.

When to Tell an Adult

Talk to your child about the need to tell an adult right away when he or she has signs of an illness. On one side of a piece of paper, help your child make a list of the signs of illness that should be reported to an adult. On the other side, make a list of adults who can help.

Want More Information on Diseases?

Contact your local Public Health Department if you would like more information about specific diseases. They often have written information on different diseases and their signs and symptoms. They also have information on what you should do as a parent or family member. A public health nurse may be able to answer your questions or help you find someone who can help.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. This website has a lot of information about many different diseases and how to keep your family healthy.

