

# Two-Minute Tips

## COVID-19 Edition: Handwashing & General Hygiene

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.”<sup>1</sup> We can encourage children to adapt a lifelong habit of proper handwashing at an early age, which will help them, and others around them stay healthy.<sup>2</sup>

### Practice Tips

#### When Can Hand Sanitizers be Used?

Alcohol-based (60-95% alcohol) hand sanitizer can be used as an alternative to handwashing (as long as hands are not visibly soiled) for the following activities:

- After wiping a nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After coming in from outside.
- Upon entering and leaving the facility.
- When staff are moving between stable groups.



#### Teach, Practice, and Reinforce

Plan a handwashing activity for a younger group of children. Sprinkle a small amount of glitter on their hands and encourage them to scrub it off. Teach them the positive outcome of handwashing. You can also read books on handwashing and general hygiene habits. A sample list of books can be found [here](#).

Pick a stuffed animal as a classroom mascot. Place the mascot near the handwashing station. When you need a child to wash their hands, you can say “Go visit Eddy the Teddy Bear” instead of “Go wash your hands.”

#### Accessible to Children

Make sure the handwashing station is accessible to all children by locating it away from high-traffic areas and at child level. Make sure soap and paper towels are available at all times. Keep in mind that some children may have sensitivities; therefore, providing fragrance-free and dye-free soap is a good way to accommodate these children.

#### Sing a Song

One fun and easy way to time handwashing is singing a 20-second song such as the ABCs or Row, Row, Row Your Boat.

To make it more fun, you can even make up relevant lyrics. For example:

“Wash, wash, wash your hands. Get them nice and clean. Scrub the tops and scrub the bottoms, and don’t forget in between!”

“Twinkle twinkle, little star. Look how clean my two hands are. Around my wrists and between my thumbs, soap my fingers, I’m almost done. Twinkle twinkle, little star. Look how clean my two hands are!”

“A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z. I have washed my hands so clean. Now I’ll dry them, look at me!”

For older children, try doing a group activity where children help write their own lyrics.

#### Visual Reminders

You can find child-friendly handwashing posters [here](#). Print and hang up posters throughout the classroom to encourage proper, frequent handwashing.

## Lead by Example

One of the best ways to encourage children to clean their hands is by washing your own. Make sure to model proper handwashing and keep encouraging them to do the same.

## Be Patient

Remember, it takes time for children to get into the habit of handwashing. It also takes time to do it properly. Be patient and make sure to help when needed.

## Ask Parents or Caregivers for Help

Consistency at home is important. Ask families to model and encourage good hand hygiene at home. Share handwashing posters for them to use at home. Communicate about the methods you implement so they can use the same methods at home.



## Tips in Action!

Watch these videos\* to see:

A provider ensuring proper handwashing procedures while promoting [language modeling](#).

An example of a classroom using [singing](#) to guide their handwashing. Click [here](#) to see the same video with Spanish subtitles.

\*Disclaimer: Linked media was filmed before COVID-19. Please follow the necessary guidelines to make these tips helpful and safe for your program.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). [Handwashing: Clean hands save lives](#). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (<https://bit.ly/2QvcPWR>)

<sup>2</sup>Children's Health. (2020). [The importance of handwashing for kids](#). (<https://bit.ly/3uSsNt5>)

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