concept

Teach children the importance of washing their hands properly to prevent spreading germs.

Why We Wash Our Hands

goals

1. To increase children's knowledge of positive health behaviors and enhance wellness.
2. To educate children and their caregivers on how to prevent common health problems by developing proper hand-washing skills.

objectives

1. Children will participate in a standard hand-washing activity.
2. Children will understand when they need to wash their hands.
3. Children will recognize the correct way to cover a cough or sneeze.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large plastic bowl
- Plastic pitcher (with warm water for hand-washing demonstration)
- Liquid soap
- Paper towels
- Strawberry yogurt
- Shakable container of cinnamon spice
- Whipped topping
- Apple slices
- 6-ounce paper cups (1 for each child)
- Plastic spoons (1 for each child)
- Measuring cups or spoons
- *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick
- *Germs Are Not for Sharing* coloring sheet (included)
- *Hand-Washing Award* (included)
- Non-toxic markers or crayons

activities

1 **Have the children sit in a circle or group on the floor.** Ask, "Do you know what germs are?"

Give each child a chance to answer and provide a simple description the children can understand. For example, say, "Germs are like tiny bugs we can't see but they can make us sick."

Ask, "How does being sick make you feel?"

Allow each child time to give some examples and follow up with praise and encouragement.

2 **Ask, "Do you know how you can help yourself not get sick?"**

Give each child a chance to answer. Say, "One way you can make sure germs don't bother you is to wash your hands many times each day."

Ask, "Can you rub your hands together? Copy me."

Encourage the children by saying, "Good job."

Why We Wash Our Hands

3 To start the next activity, you will need a large plastic bowl, a pitcher of warm water, liquid soap, and paper towels.

PLEASE NOTE: Liquid soap is recommended since it does not sit in a soap dish which can carry germs.

While the children are sitting in a circle, demonstrate the correct way and duration for hand washing. Say, "Watch how I wash my hands."

Instruct the children to do pretend play and copy your actions (encourage the children by saying, "That's right" and "Good job"). Demonstrate the following:

A. Wet your hands by pouring warm water on them with the pitcher. Do this step over the bowl (you can ask the children to pretend the pitcher is a faucet that's being turned on).

B. Apply liquid soap to hands and rub them energetically together. Scrub all surfaces, including the back of the hands and underneath the fingernails (clean underneath fingernails by scratching nails on the palm of the opposite hand, repeat with other hand).

C. While demonstrating, you should use fun action words in sentences like, "We can squish the soap between our fingers."

D. To ensure hands are washed for the recommended length of time (20 seconds), sing "Row Your Boat" twice or the "Alphabet Song" once. Continue washing hands until the chosen song is completed. Another option is to have the children sing the following song verse by verse after you. Sing this twice and to the tune of "Row Your Boat":

"Wash, wash, wash your hands
Play our handy game.
Rub and scrub, and scrub and rub.
Germs go down the drain.
Wash, wash, wash your hands
Play our handy game.
Rub and scrub, and scrub and rub.
Dirt goes down the drain."

E. After the song is finished, use the pitcher to rinse your hands with water.

F. Immediately dry your hands with a clean towel or preferably a disposable towel (remind the children that sharing the same towel is not sanitary). Tell the children that when they wash their hands at a sink they will need to turn off the water faucet without having direct contact with the handle. To do this they will use a clean, dry paper towel to cover the handle before touching it (this prevents the transfer of germs from the handle back to the hands).

4 After completing the hand-washing activity, ask the children, "When do you think you should wash your hands?" Allow time for the children to answer and then go over a few of the examples from the following list:

- **After touching a cut, sore, or "boo-boo"**
- **Before eating or touching food**
- **After going to the bathroom and flushing the toilet**
- **After touching your pet**
- **After you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose**
- **After touching money**
- **After playing outside or with shared toys**

5 Say, "There is another way that you can help yourself not get sick. It is very important that if you cough or sneeze that you cover your mouth with your elbow and not your hand, unless you have a tissue in it."

Demonstrate and say, "Let's all pretend to sneeze into our elbows. Put your right hand on your left shoulder and say 'achoo' as you sneeze into your elbow. Now let's try using the other elbow. Put your left hand on your right shoulder and say 'achoo' again as you sneeze into your elbow."

Continue by saying, "If you forget to do this, make sure you wash your hands after sneezing or coughing into them."

Why We Wash Our Hands

6 To start the next activity, you will need strawberry yogurt, cinnamon, whipped topping, apple slices, paper cups, plastic spoons, and measuring cups and spoons. Ask, "Who is ready for a snack?"

Allow time for the children to answer and then continue, "What is really important to do before we eat or touch food?"

Praise the children for answering correctly when they say that they need to wash their hands first. After all the children have washed their hands, give each child a paper cup and a plastic spoon. Put ¼ cup strawberry yogurt, 1 shake of cinnamon, and 2 tablespoons of whipped topping into each child's paper cup. Ask the children to stir everything together until it is completely mixed. Then, give each child a ½ cup of apple slices that they can dip into the Strawberry Yogurt Dip.

After the children have finished eating their snack, have the children wash their hands again.

7 Read the book *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick with great animation to keep the children's attention. Encourage the children to follow along by demonstrating what the characters in the book are doing.

8 Make copies of the *Germs Are Not for Sharing* coloring sheet and the *Hand-Washing Award* (both included). Save the *Hand-Washing Award* copies until later and provide each child with a coloring sheet. Have markers or crayons available so each table or group can start coloring.

9 After the children are done coloring, have everyone move to an area (inside or outside) where the following game can be played. Explain, "Let's play a game! Let's pretend that we are germs! How should we act? Can you show me?"

Pretend to be a germ as well, maybe by slowly crawling on the floor. Allow the children time to move around the room like germs and then encourage them by saying, "Nice work! Now let's pretend that we are soap bubbles floating around the room. Can you show me how you would do that? We need to clean up everything that a germ might have touched!"

Join in and pretend to float around the room with the children using very animated movements to encourage as much movement as possible. Say, "Great job! I know that our soap bubbles got rid of all those germs!"

If the game is played outside, make sure the children wash their hands after returning inside.

10 After the children have finished playing the game, have everyone return to their seats. Say, "You have all learned how and why we need to wash our hands. I think everyone should know how important that is so I am giving you a special *Hand-Washing Award* (included) to take home to show your family."

Send the certificate home with the *Germs Are Not for Sharing* coloring sheet.

Remember to make copies of the parent letter with the take-home activity sheet printed on the reverse side to send home with each child. The community fact sheet is also included for you to copy and display at your center or distribute as appropriate.

concept

Teach children the importance of washing their hands properly to prevent spreading germs.

Why We Wash Our Hands

goals

1. To increase children's knowledge of positive health behaviors and enhance wellness.
2. To educate children and their caregivers on how to prevent common health problems by developing proper hand-washing skills.

objectives

1. Children will demonstrate acceptable hand-washing skills.
2. Children will identify when they need to wash their hands.
3. Children will recognize the correct way to cover a cough or sneeze.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large plastic bowl
- Plastic pitcher (with warm water for hand-washing demonstration)
- Liquid soap
- Paper towels
- Cooking oil
- Shakable container of cinnamon spice
- *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick (early childhood version for ages 4–7)
- Foam ball or any child friendly object to play tag
- Strawberry yogurt
- Whipped topping
- Apple slices
- 6-ounce paper cups (1 for each child)
- Plastic spoons (1 for each child)
- Measuring cups or spoons
- *Hand-Washing Award* (included)

activities

1 **Have the children sit in a circle or group on the floor.** Ask, "Do you know what germs are?"

Give each child a chance to answer and then give a simple description of germs by saying, "Germs are like tiny bugs we can't see but they can make us sick."

Ask, "How does being sick make you feel?"

Allow each child to give some examples and follow up with praise and encouragement.

2 **Ask, "Do you know how you can help yourself not get sick?"**

Give each child a chance to answer. Say, "One way you can make sure germs don't bother you is to wash your hands many times each day."

Ask, "Can you rub your hands together? Copy me."

Encourage the children by saying, "Good job."

Why We Wash Our Hands

3 To start the next activity, you will need a large plastic bowl, a pitcher of warm water, liquid soap, and paper towels.

PLEASE NOTE: Liquid soap is recommended since it does not sit in a soap dish which can carry germs.

While the children are sitting in a circle, demonstrate the correct way and duration for hand washing. Say, "Watch how I wash my hands."

The children should be instructed to do pretend play and copy your actions.

Encourage the children by saying, "Good job."

Demonstrate the following:

A. Wet your hands by pouring warm water on them with the pitcher. Do this step over the bowl (you can ask the children to pretend the pitcher is a faucet that's being turned on).

B. Apply liquid soap to hands and rub them energetically together. Scrub all surfaces, including the back of the hands and underneath the fingernails (clean underneath fingernails by scratching nails on the palm of the opposite hand, repeat with other hand).

C. While demonstrating, you should use fun action words in sentences like, "We can squish the soap between our fingers."

D. To ensure hands are washed for the recommended length of time (20 seconds), sing "Row Your Boat" twice or the "Alphabet Song" once. Continue washing hands until the chosen song is completed. Another option is to have the children sing the following song verse by verse after you. Sing this twice and to the tune of "Row Your Boat":

"Wash, wash, wash your hands
Play our handy game.
Rub and scrub, and scrub and rub.
Germs go down the drain.
Wash, wash, wash your hands
Play our handy game.
Rub and scrub, and scrub and rub.
Dirt goes down the drain."

E. After the song is finished, use the pitcher to rinse your hands with water.

F. Immediately dry your hands with a clean towel or preferably a disposable towel (remind the children that sharing the same towel is not sanitary). Tell the children that when they wash their hands at a sink they will need to turn off the water faucet without having direct contact with the handle. To do this they will use a clean, dry paper towel to cover the handle before touching it (this prevents the transfer of germs from the handle back to the hands).

4 Before starting the next activity, get cooking oil (enough for each child to have a dime-sized amount), and a shakable container of cinnamon spice. Put a dime-sized amount of cooking oil on the children's palms and sprinkle cinnamon on top. Instruct the children to rub their hands together, making sure to get the cinnamon all over both hands. Say, "Let's imagine the cinnamon I just sprinkled is germs. How do we get rid of germs on our hands?"

Allow time for the children to answer and then continue, "That's right! We need to wash our hands the same way I just showed you."

Have the children wash their hands with warm water (if available) and supervise them to ensure the water doesn't get too hot. After all of the children are finished, have them pair up with another child to look for any "germs" that might be left. Ask, "Do you see any 'germs' left on your partner's hands?"

Allow the children time to respond, and if any of them still have oil or cinnamon on their hands allow them to re-wash their hands. You may need to remind the children to sing one of the hand-washing songs to make sure they are washing for the correct amount of time. Be sure to explain that it is very important to wash their hands the correct way to get rid of germs and not get sick.

5 Read the book *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick with great animation to keep the children's attention. Encourage the children to follow along by demonstrating what the characters in the book are doing.

Why We Wash Our Hands

6 After reading the book, ask, "When do you think you should wash your hands?"

Allow time for the children to answer and then go over at least some of the instances from the following list:

- **After touching a cut, sore, or "boo-boo"**
- **Before eating or touching food**
- **After going to the bathroom and flushing the toilet**
- **After touching your pet**
- **After you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose**
- **After touching money**
- **After playing outside or with shared toys**
- **After playing with a loose tooth**

7 Say, "There is another way that you can help yourself not get sick. It is very important that if you cough or sneeze that you cover your mouth with your elbow and not your hand, unless you have a tissue in it."

Demonstrate and say, "Let's all pretend to sneeze into our elbows. Put your right hand on your left shoulder and say 'achoo' as you sneeze into your elbow. Now let's try using the other elbow. Put your left hand on your right shoulder and say 'achoo' again as you sneeze into your elbow."

Continue by saying "If you forget to do this, make sure you wash your hands after sneezing or coughing into them."

8 Say, "Let's all sing a song about coughing and sneezing. I will sing the song and demonstrate the movements and then you can do it with me!"

Sing the "Cough or Sneeze" lyrics below to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb." While singing, do the following movements: whenever you say "cough" use your right elbow to cover your mouth and whenever you say "sneeze" use your left elbow to cover your mouth. Repeat the song several times getting faster each time.

"When you have to cough or sneeze,
cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze,

When you have to cough or sneeze,
cover your mouth please!

When you have to cough or sneeze,
cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze,

When you have to cough or sneeze,
cover your mouth please!"

9 After the children have finished doing the "Cough or Sneeze" song as fast as they can, find an open area. Ask, "Do you want to play a game?"

After the children have responded, say, "This game is called Germ Tag."

Explain that the person who is "it" has a foam ball (or any soft object) that is used as a "pretend germ." When someone else is tagged with the foam ball then they are "it!" Watch the children closely as they may fall or tag too hard. Continue playing until the children are too tired or time runs out. After the game is over, make sure the children wash their hands to get rid of the pretend germs.

10 Before starting the next activity, you will need strawberry yogurt, cinnamon, whipped topping, apple slices, paper cups, plastic spoons, and measuring cups and spoons. Ask, "Who is ready for a snack?"

Allow time for the children to answer and then continue, "What is really important to do before we eat or touch food?"

Praise the children for answering correctly when they say that they need to wash their hands first. After all the children have washed their hands, give each child a paper cup and a plastic spoon. Put ¼ cup strawberry yogurt, 1 shake of cinnamon, and 2 tablespoons of whipped topping into each child's paper cup. Ask the children to stir everything together until it is completely mixed. Then, give each child a ½ cup of apple slices that they can dip into the Strawberry Yogurt Dip. After the children have finished eating their snack, have the children wash their hands again.

11 After snack is over, make a copy of the *Hand-Washing Award* (included) for each child. Then say, "You have all learned how and why we need to wash our hands today. I think everyone should know how important that is so I am giving you a special *Hand-Washing Award* to take home to show your family."

Send the certificate home with the children.

additional activities for either age group

Clean Hand, Dirty Hand Art Activity

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Soap* sheet (included)
- *Germ* sheet (included)
- Scissors for the teacher
- Dinner-size paper plates (2 per child)
- Pencil (1 per child)
- Blue non-toxic markers
- Assorted non-toxic crayons
- Shallow pan
- Bubble solution and wands
- Non-toxic glue sticks

Make enough copies of the soap and germ sheets (both included) so that when the pictures are cut out, every child will have one soap picture and one germ picture to color later in this activity.

- Hand out two paper plates and 1 pencil to each child. Instruct them to trace their right hand on one plate and their left hand on the other (assist children as necessary). After the children have two traced hands, pass out the markers and crayons. Explain that one traced hand should be colored with the blue marker only; this will be the "clean hand." The other hand can be colored with the different colored crayons; this will be the "dirty hand."
- Set up a bubble station by setting up multiple bottles of bubbles or pouring bubble solution into a shallow pan. Have the children bring their "clean hand" to the bubble station and use a bubble wand to blow bubbles onto it. The bubbles will burst on the "clean hand' and leave "soap bubble" imprints when dried. The children can take turns going to the bubble station until everyone has had a turn.
- Have the children return to their seats and ask, "What helps make our hands clean?" Allow the children time to answer. After the children say soap, continue, "That's right!" Pass a soap picture to each child and tell them to color it. Once colored, have the children use a glue stick to attach the picture to the "clean hand."
- Ask the children, "What do we find on dirty hands that can make us sick?" When the children answer germs, say, "Great job!" Pass out a germ picture to each child and ask them to color it. Once colored, have the children glue this on the "dirty hand."
- Make sure the children's names are on the back of their artwork and then display the finished products throughout the room.

Remember to make copies of the parent letter with the take-home activity sheet printed on the reverse side to send home with each child. The community fact sheet is also included for you to copy and display at your center or distribute as appropriate.

Adapted from *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick, illustrated by Marieka Heinlen
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Soap Sheet

Germ Sheet

Hand-Washing Award

Presented to _____

for learning how and when to wash your hands properly.

_____

TEACHER DATE

Dear Parent:

Your child has been learning about hand washing as an important way to prevent the spread of germs in our lesson, *Why We Wash Our Hands.*

We have learned about the many different reasons we should wash our hands and other various ways to stay healthy. For example, ask your child to show you the best way to sneeze so that germs are not shared.

What do soap and the alphabet have in common?

It is easier to build healthy habits for life if we start developing them as children. Help reinforce the importance of hand washing by making it a fun activity. Sing the "Alphabet Song" with your child while you wash your hands—this ensures hands are being washed for at least 20 seconds.

Turn this page over and find another fun activity to do with your child.

Sincerely,

When should you wash your hands?

Circle the activities below.

Are You Sharing Germs?

Hand washing is the single most important means of disease prevention. In fact, most people forget just how significant hand washing is, not only in avoiding the spread of germs, but also in the prevention of illnesses and diseases.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before preparing or eating food
- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning after a child who has gone to the bathroom
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After coughing or sneezing
- After petting animals
- After handling garbage or animal waste
- After touching money

CORRECT HAND-WASHING STEPS

1. Wet hands with warm water and apply liquid soap.
2. Rub hands energetically together and scrub all surfaces, including the back of the hands and underneath the fingernails (clean underneath fingernails by scratching nails on the palm of the opposite hand).
3. To ensure hands are washed for the recommended length of time (20 seconds), sing the "Alphabet Song" in your head.
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a paper towel.
5. Turn off the faucet using a clean and dry paper towel to prevent picking up germs from the faucet.

Find more helpful tips at:

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC): http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html

Why We Wash Our Hands

references and resources

1. Verdick, Elizabeth. *Germs Are Not for Sharing*. Minnesota: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 2006.
2. Food Safety for Super Star Nutrition, Author: Oregon's Department of Education. Website: www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/cacfp/tn/food_safety/
3. Hand Washing Curriculum, Author: Cathy Abraham Med. Website: www.units4teachers.com/PDF/handwashing.pdf