

The Importance of Hand Washing

Good hand washing protects your child against the spread of many illnesses, such as:

- Common Cold
- Meningitis
- Flu
- Hepatitis A
- Infectious Diarrhea
- Streptococcus

Hand washing is the first line of defense for your child against germs. Germs can be transmitted by:

- touching dirty hands
- changing dirty diapers
- through contaminated water and food
- through droplets released during a cough or sneeze
- **via contaminated surfaces**
- through contact with a sick person's body fluids

Wash your hands together often so your child will learn how important this good habit is. **Proper hand washing procedures** are as follows:

1. Wash their hands in warm water. Make sure the water isn't too hot for little hands.
2. Use soap and lather up for about 20 seconds. Make sure you get in between their fingers and under the nails where uninvited germs like to hang out. And don't forget their wrists.
3. Rinse and dry their hands well with a clean towel.

To minimize the spread of germs, wash hands:

- before eating and cooking
- after using the bathroom
- after cleaning around the house
- after touching animals, including family pets
- before and after visiting or taking care of any sick friends or relatives
- after blowing one's nose, coughing, sneezing
- after being outside (playing, gardening, walking the dog, etc.)

*Don't underestimate the power of hand washing! The 20 seconds you spend washing you and your child's hands can save you trips to the doctor's office.

Resources

http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sick/hand_washing.html#