



# Summer Sanitation

## Review basic practices for preventing disease.

We often emphasize disease prevention in the fall, when we remind parents about immunizations, and in winter, when cold and flu outbreaks are likely to occur. However, disease prevention is never out of season, especially for basic sanitary practices such as handwashing, diapering, and disinfecting. And summer is an ideal time to review preventive practices because this is the time to update parent handbooks and train new staff.

### Wear gloves? Still need to wash

Some teachers and caregivers wear gloves when diapering to prevent contact with a child's bodily fluids. Gloves are not a substitute for handwashing. The use of gloves alone will not prevent the spread of germs. If you use gloves, wash your hands immediately after removing them, even if your hands are not visibly soiled.

## Handwashing

The single best way to prevent disease in your child care facilities is handwashing. Train caregivers and teachers how and when to wash their hands, and teach children proper handwashing practice.

### Teacher and caregivers

Wash your hands:

- **When** you arrive at work.
- **Before** handling food, preparing bottles, feeding children, or eating.
- **Before** giving medicine or applying ointment to a child or yourself.
- **After** using the toilet, helping a child use the toilet, or changing diapers.
- **After** contacting a child's body fluids, including wet or soiled diapers, runny noses, spit, and vomit.
- **After** caring for a child with symptoms of a communicable disease.
- **After** handling pets, pet cages, or other pet objects.
- **After** contact with any potentially infectious or toxic materials.
- **After** removing sanitary gloves.
- **Whenever** hands are visibly dirty, such as after mixing paint or doing a gardening activity.

### Children

Help them wash their hands:

- **Before** eating or handling food.
- **After** using the toilet or having diapers changed.
- **Before** using water tables.
- **After** handling pets, pet cages, or other pet objects.
- **After** playing outdoors.
- **Whenever** hands are visibly dirty, such as after making mud pies.

## How to wash hands

Liquid soap and running water are essential for removing germs. Premoistened towelettes or waterless hand cleaners are not a substitute for washing hands with soap and water. Antibacterial soaps may be used but are not required. Liquid hand soap is preferable to bar soap, because germs can collect and grow on the bar.

- Wet the hands and apply liquid soap, about the size of a dime or quarter.
- Rub hands together vigorously to create a soapy lather, and continue rubbing for at least 15 seconds. Scrub between fingers, under fingernails, if necessary.
- Rinse hands under warm running water.
- Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
- Turn off the faucet using the towel (to avoid picking up germs you may have left there when you turned off the faucet).
- Discard the used towel in a trashcan lined with a plastic bag.
- Consider using a non-greasy hand cream after handwashing. You will probably wash your hands 20 to 30 times a day. This can cause your skin to become dry and chapped, leading to broken skin that could become infected.

## Diapering

Use diaper-changing areas only for changing diapers. Locate the area so it's out of reach of children, easily accessible to the caregiver, and as far away as possible from any food handling areas. Place it next to a sink with running water. Choose a table with a raised edge to prevent a child from falling off, and provide a smooth and nonporous surface, such as plastic laminate (not wood). Cover the table with a relatively nonabsorbent material like butcher paper, freezer paper, or disposable squares purchased from medical supply companies. Clean and disinfect the table after each change.

Organize the needed supplies within reach. Supplies include fresh diapers and clean clothes (if needed), disposable towels or premoistened towelettes to clean the child's bottom, a covered

## How to change diapers

### Get organized.

- Gather the materials that you need and bring them to the changing area.
- Cover the diapering table.
- If using gloves, put them on.

### Avoid soiled areas but always keep a hand on the baby.

- Place the child on the paper covering. In picking up the child, hold the child's body away from yours to avoid soiling your clothes.
- Bag soiled clothes and securely tie the plastic bag to send home with the child.

### Clean the child's diaper area.

- Unfasten the soiled diaper, but leave it under the child.
- Clean the child's bottom with a premoistened towelette or a dampened disposable towel.
- Remove feces and urine from front to back, using a fresh wipe each time. Put the wipes into the soiled diaper.

### Remove the dirty diaper and clean surfaces.

- Fold the diaper over and secure it with the tabs.
- Place the soiled disposable diaper in a covered, lined trashcan.
- If you are wearing gloves, dispose of them in the trashcan.
- Wipe your hands with a disposable wipe.

### Put on a clean diaper.

- Place a fresh diaper (and clothes, if necessary) on the child.

### Clean the baby's hands.

- Remove the child from the table.
- Wash the child's hands using soap and warm, running water at a sink.

### Clean and disinfect the diapering area.

- Dispose of the table liner.
- Disinfect the diapering surface and all equipment and supplies you touched.

### Wash your hands.

- Use liquid soap and warm running water.
- Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

trash can lined with a plastic bag, and plastic bags for each child's clothing. Parents may provide ointment for diaper rash. If so, label the container with the child's name, and use it for that child only. Keep all creams, lotions, and cleaning items out of the reach of children.

Change wet or soiled diapers immediately. Never allow a child to wear a wet or soiled diaper for extended periods because you want to follow a schedule. It's important to be flexible and responsive to the children's needs.

### **Helping a child use the potty**

Ideally, you will use child-sized toilets or modified toilet seats with step stools that children can climb upon by themselves. If you must use a potty chair for toilet training, make sure it is made of a smooth, nonporous material that can be easily cleaned. Keep it in the bathroom away from other toilets. Consider asking parents to supply a chair that only their child will use.

- **Help** the child lower training pants and get seated, if necessary.
- **After** the child has finished, help the child put pants back on (or change them) and wash hands.
- **Put** on safety gloves.
- **Empty** the contents in the potty into a toilet, being careful not to splash or touch the water in the toilet.
- **Rinse** the potty from a faucet used only for custodial cleaning. Never rinse the potty in a sink used for washing hands or preparing food.
- **Dump** the rinse water into the toilet and flush.
- **Wash and disinfect** the potty chair, the sink used for rinsing, the toilet seat, faucet handle, and any other surfaces that may have been exposed to the contents or your hands.
- **Remove** safety gloves, and wash your hands.

### **How to clean and disinfect surfaces**

You can remove many germs by cleaning with soap and water. Scrubbing a surface (and your

## **How to take a child's temperature**

### **Preparation**

- Shake a mercury thermometer until the mercury line is below 95 degrees F.
- Use a new disposable thermometer cover.
- Do not take a rectal temperature unless you have had specific training.

### **Axillary (armpit) temperatures**

- Use an oral thermometer.
- Place the tip of the thermometer in a dry armpit.
- Close the armpit by holding the elbow against the child's side for 5 minutes.
- Axillary readings are not reliable and should be used for screening only. If the temperature is higher than 99 degrees F., use a second, more accurate method.

### **Oral temperatures**

- Use an oral thermometer.
- If the child drinks a cold or warm liquid, wait at least 15 minutes before taking the temperature.
- Place the thermometer tip under the right side of the tongue.
- Have the child hold the thermometer in place with the lips and fingers, not the teeth.
- Have the child breathe through the nose and not the mouth.
- Leave the thermometer in place for 3 minutes.

### **Aural (ear canal) and temperature strip readings**

- Follow the manufacturer's directions.

### **Reading the thermometer**

- For mercury thermometers, turn the thermometer slightly until the mercury line appears. Record the temperature to the nearest tenth of a degree.
- For digital thermometers, read and record the number when the thermometer signals.

### **Cleaning the thermometer**

- Remove and throw away the disposable cover.
- Wash the thermometer in cold water and soap. Rinse in cold water.
- Wipe the thermometer with rubbing alcohol or a bleach solution. Let it air dry and return it to its case.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm, running water.

hands) with soap and water physically loosens the germs. Rinsing with water makes them flow down the drain.

However, some surfaces require an additional step – disinfecting. This step kills germs, either by extreme heat or chemicals. You can disinfect some items by running them through a hot water wash cycle in a dishwasher or washing machine. For other items, use a solution of 1/4 cup chlorine bleach and 1 gallon of water. Because this solution loses its strength easily, mix it fresh every day. Keep it in a cool place out of direct sunlight and out of the reach of children.

- Spray the disinfectant on the surface until it is drenched.
- Let it stand for at least 10 minutes or until dry.

### **How to deal with illness**

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Have a written policy for excluding sick children from care. Give parents a copy of the policy when they enroll their children and explain it to them at that time. This will help prevent problems later when a child gets sick. Try, however, to set a policy that is reasonably flexible. Obviously, seriously ill children should not be in care, but some mildly ill children and those who are being treated by a physician may pose no health risk to other children or to teachers.

Exclude children from care if:

- The child's illness is highly communicable,
- The child does not feel well enough to participate in activities, or
- The staff is not able to care for both the sick child and well children.

When children arrive at your home or center each day, check their overall health. If you notice any unusual symptoms, talk with parents about them before the parent leaves.

During the day, if children develop any of the following symptoms, call parents to pick up their child. Separate the sick child from other children.

- **Fever** – a temperature at or above 101.4 degrees F. taken by mouth, 99.4 degrees F. taken under the arm, or 101.4 degrees F. taken rectally accompanied by behavior

changes or signs or symptoms of illness. For babies 4 months and younger, a rectal temperature of 101 degrees F. or an axillary (under the arm) temperature of 100 degrees F. is considered a fever.

- **Uncontrolled diarrhea** – runny, watery, or bloody stools
- **Vomiting** – two or more times in a 24-hour period
- Body **rash** with fever
- **Sore throat** with fever and swollen glands
- **Severe coughing or wheezing** – child gets red or blue in the face or makes high-pitched whooping sound after coughing
- **Eye discharge** – thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or pink eye
- **Yellowish skin** or eyes
- **Pain, continuous crying, or irritability** that requires more attention than you can provide without hurting the health and safety of other children in your care.

If a child does not respond to you, is having trouble breathing, or is having a convulsion, call 911.

### **Prevent disease while swimming**

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Swimming is fun and a great way to stay cool in summer. But it's also community bathing, and swimmers may unknowingly spread germs through pool water.

It takes only a tiny amount of germs to cause a stomachache or diarrhea as well as a range of other ailments, including respiratory, ear, eye, and skin infections. These germs can be especially harmful for young children and people with weakened immune systems. Young children can also be a source of germs if they accidentally urinate or defecate in the pool.

Splashing pools and wading pools hold water less than 2 feet deep. They can be used for children who are toilet trained. Keep these pools out of the reach of children when they are not in use. Drain and sanitize them at least daily.

Swimming pools hold water more than 2 feet deep. In addition to requiring a higher staff-to-

child ratio, a certified lifeguard must be on duty while children swim. Swimming pools usually include a pump and filtration system that uses chemicals to kill germs. Chlorine kills all of them. Caregivers who plan swimming and water play activities for children need to take precautions to prevent disease.

- Do not allow children to go swimming if they show symptoms of any infectious disease.
- Do not take children who are not fully toilet trained into swimming pools. Play with a trickling hose or gentle sprinkler instead.
- Have children use the toilet before swimming, and give them plenty of bathroom breaks. Waiting to hear “I have to go” may be too late.
- Provide clean drinking water or fruit juice for children to drink when they are thirsty. Teach them not to drink pool water. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/)

## Reference

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*The ABCs of Safe and Healthy Child Care: An On-Line Handbook for Child Care Providers*, Department of Health and Human Services, U. S. Public Health Service, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/)). This book revises and updates the previous CDC handbook, *What to Do to Stop Disease in Child Day Care Centers*, which is out of print.

Kendrick, Abby S., Roxane Kaufmann, and Katherine Messenger, eds. *Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995.

## Discussion questions

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1. When and why should teachers and caregivers wash their hands?
2. When and why should children wash their hands?
3. What is the proper procedure for all hand washing?
4. Describe the ideal diaper changing area.
5. What are the eight steps of diaper changing?
6. Why is it important to mix a fresh disinfecting solu-

tion every day? How is it done?

7. Describe the proper techniques for taking a child's temperature.
8. Describe the dangers of taking a diapered child into a swimming pool.