

HAND-WASHING

AIM:

To minimise the spread and risks of infectious diseases between children, families, educators, scheme staff and visitors by following the recommended hand-washing guidelines and standards.

RATIONALE:

Educators, children in care and their families are at increased risk of many infectious diseases, particularly respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases but also diseases such as Hepatitis A and CMV. Effective hand hygiene can involve soap and water, or waterless hand rubs/sanitiser. Disposable gloves can also be part of the hand hygiene process.

Maintaining high standards of hygiene is essential in preventing the spread of infectious diseases and ensuring good health. Consultation with educators and families of Clarence Family Day Care reflects that all stakeholders support the guidelines as set down in Element 2.1.3 of the National Quality Standards and acknowledge that emergencies may result in changes to the normal sequence of procedures and practices.

PRACTICES

To use effective hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infectious disease, educators will:

Make facilities for hand washing available in the vicinity of areas where children or others use toilets, where nappies are changed, food is stored, prepared or served, and near areas of outdoor play.

Ensure that toileting and hand-washing facilities are safe, regularly cleaned, and appropriate for the number and ages of children in care.

Use liquid soap, and rinse hands under running water wherever possible, as microbial contamination is less likely to occur if correct procedures are followed.

Ensure effective drying of hands with individual towels, disposable paper towels or an automatic hand-dryer. *Using disposable paper towels is considered to be "best practice"*

Cover any cuts, abrasions, dermatitis or open wounds on their hands with a water-resistant dressing, which is changed each time it is soiled when caring for children.

In situations where running water is not available or hand washing is impractical, use non-water cleansers or antiseptics such as alcohol based hand rub, gel, foam or wipes. Ensure that children do not mouth or inhale fumes from wipes. If hands are visibly soiled, washing with liquid soap and running water should be done if possible. *(Read directions carefully as some products may have warnings.)*

Use disposable paper towels in preference to cloth towels. If cloth towels are used, each person or child is to have their own individual towel. When towels are hung to dry, they should not be in contact with each other; paper towels should be disposed of in a bin as soon as possible after use.

Use a disposable paper towel to turn off taps, where practical. Taps, sinks and toilet flush handles should be cleaned daily.

HOW TO WASH HANDS

Use the following method to make sure your hands and the children's hands are as germfree as possible. The process of thoroughly washing and rinsing your hands should take around 30 seconds. This can be achieved by slowly counting to 10 when you wash and then slowly counting to 10 when you rinse. This is about as long as it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice.(Staying Healthy In Childcare - 5th Edition)

- wet hands with running water,
- apply liquid soap to hands,
- wash hands vigorously for 20 seconds,
- wash hands all over, including the backs of hands, wrists, between the fingers, and under the fingernails,
- rinse hands thoroughly to remove all suds and germs. *Thorough rinsing will help prevent dermatitis from soap residue,*
- turn off the tap using a paper towel,
- dry hands using a disposable paper towel, individual cloth towel or dryer

HAND SANITISERS

Hand sanitisers have been proven to improve hand hygiene in healthcare settings, and it also makes sense to have them in education and care services. They are a fast and effective way to remove germs that may have been picked up by touching contaminated surfaces.

Hand sanitisers are also useful when performing multiple tasks in which hands can potentially become contaminated; for example, when assisting children with eating, when on excursions, in the playground, or in other situations where soap and water may not always be available.

It is a good idea to place a hand sanitiser at the entrance to the service. This can help ensure that parents, educators and children remember to have clean hands when they enter the service.

HOW TO USE HAND SANITISER

- apply the amount recommended by the manufacturer onto dry hands
- rub hands together so the hand rub comes in contact with all parts of the hands
- keep rubbing until the cleaner has evaporated and hands are dry.
- It is important to remember that soap and water are the best option when your hands are visibly dirty. If you have visible dirt, grease or food on your hands, it is preferable to wash your hands with soap and water, rather than use a hand rub. However, even if your hands are visibly dirty, using a hand rub is better than not cleaning your hands at all.
- Hand rubs are safe to use as directed, but children may be at risk if they eat or drink the hand cleaner, or splash it into their eyes or mouth. Hand rubs should be kept well out of reach of children and only used with adult supervision.

WHEN TO WASH HANDS OR USE A NON-WATER HAND SANITISER

Children, educators, parents, other visitors and persons normally residing in the home should wash hands:

- before and after eating, handling, preparing or cooking food,
- after handling garbage,
- before putting on gloves to change a nappy,
- after changing a nappy, having a nappy changed or checking a nappy to see if it is soiled,
- after going to the toilet, or helping a child use the toilet,
- after cleaning up or having contact with urine, faeces, vomit, blood or other body fluids,
- before giving medication and before and after giving first aid,
- after wiping nose or having contact with nasal secretions,
- after coming in from outside play,
- after patting or touching animals or pets (including fish, birds, reptiles),

IT IS RECOMMENDED that hand hygiene procedures be followed upon arrival at the service and before leaving the service premises. (*Educators will ensure that all parents and visitors have access to the means to, and are encouraged, through the use of visual aids, to perform hand hygiene procedures*)

Relevant Legislation: *Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011;*
Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

Key Resources: *Staying Healthy in Child Care, (5th Edition) NHMRC, 2013;*
Health & Safety in Family Day Care: Model Policies & Practices, 2003.