

# HANDWASHING POLICY

Having and encouraging good hygiene practices in early childhood is essential for reducing the risk of infection. Helping children to develop appropriate personal hygiene habits will become embedded as they grow and develop. It is important to work with families to ensure children follow simple hygiene rules by incorporating good hygiene strategies in both the Service and home environment.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, Hygiene and safe food practices
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities

## RELATED POLICIES

Administration of Medication Policy  
 Control of Infectious Disease Policy  
 Health & Safety Policy  
 Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy  
 Supervision Policy  
 Work Health and Safety Policy

## PURPOSE

Our Service is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all educators, staff, volunteers, families, and children, providing a safe and healthy environment. Effective hand hygiene significantly reduces the risk of infection and is therefore of the utmost importance. We aim to perform specific hand washing hygiene practices to minimise the risks associated with cross infection.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Infection can be spread through direct physical contact between people, airborne droplets from coughing and sneezing or from contact with surfaces and objects. Children come into contact with a number of other children and adults, toys, eating utensils, and equipment. This high degree of physical contact with people and the environment creates a higher risk of children being exposed to and spreading infectious illnesses. Whilst it may not be possible for services to prevent the spread of all infections, we aim to create a hygienic environment to minimise the spread of diseases and infections.

Hand washing is a vital strategy in the prevention of spreading many infectious diseases. Research emphasises good handwashing as the single most important task you can do to reduce the spread of bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites that infect yourself, other staff and children being cared for.

Micro-organisms such as bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites are present on the hands at all times and live in the oil that is naturally produced on your hands. The use of soap or detergent and water remove most of these organisms and decreases the risk of cross infection.

- Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements, standards, and guidelines to support the effectiveness of our hand washing policy. We aim to educate and encourage children to wash their hands effectively which will help to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases, adhering to guidelines provided in *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* to guide best practice.

To ensure the greatest level of personal hygiene, it is a requirement of the Service to wash your hands:

- On arrival at the Service.
- After going to the toilet.
- After blowing your own nose.
- Before and after administering first aid.
- Before and after administering medication.
- After using chemicals.
- Before eating, preparing, and serving food.
- After cleaning up bodily fluids.
- After removing protective gloves.
- Before going home.

Children will be encouraged to follow educators modelling and wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day.

Educators will ensure all required equipment is easily accessible and appropriate for use.

Strategies Educators will use to encourage effective hand hygiene practice include:

- Talking about the importance of hygiene.
- Singing a song or reciting a poem as a guide to how long it should take to wash hands (e.g. singing happy birthday twice is a sufficient time frame).
- Using a clear visual poster with step by step instructions.
- Using positive language.
- Encouraging and using positive reinforcement.
- Ensuring equipment is accessible.
- Providing clear simple routines.
- Giving children sufficient time to practice and develop their skills.
- Ensuring adequate supervision and assistance is available when required.

We believe the hygiene practices of children being cared for should be as rigorous as those of staff and educators. Our environment supports appropriate hygiene practice.

## Hand Drying

Effective hand drying is just as important as comprehensive hand washing. Research states that wet hands can pick up and transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands. Drying hands thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off. We provide children, staff, and educators with disposable paper towel/warm air dryers to ensure effective hand hygiene.