

Teaching Handwashing In School

Handwashing really is our best defense against many kinds of bacteria and viruses that cause infection. It's particularly important in schools, where lots of things are shared - desks, books, pencils, food, and even *germs*.

Without proper hand cleaning, a single infection can quickly spread among students, teachers, family, and friends.



Teaching Tips

Hand cleaning and basic hygiene habits are generally learned during early childhood. But it needs to be reinforced for them to wash them as often and thoroughly as they should.

- Research suggests that it is important for hygiene lessons to be repeated during the K-12 school curricula.
- Using a coordinated approach, teachers, school nurses, administrators, and students can all take part in a campaign. Student involvement especially can boost its impact.
- Great resources already exist for schools — some are listed below. Some promotional materials, curricula, and activity ideas.
- Want to impact absenteeism? Promote handwashing and make it convenient at these key times:
 1. upon arrival at school
 2. before lunch
 3. after using the restroom
 4. before leaving school for home

Handwashing Campaigns & Curricula

Germ City (United States Department of Agriculture) — www.germcity.wsu.edu

Science-based, education exhibit and program designed for use at fairs, festivals, elementary and middle schools, food service operations, and health care facilities. *Example program—Washington State University*

Glo Germ — www.glogerm.com

Free downloadable worksheets for kindergarten through 6th grades in English and French. Black Ultraviolet lights, Glo Germ lotion and powder are available to buy.

Henry the Hand — www.henryhand.com

Tool kit that includes curriculum, science projects and more. In addition the site offers interactive handwashing songs and videos, coloring pages, and posters.

It's a Snap (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) — www.itsasnap.org

Offers a free educational poster/tool kit that makes it easy to incorporate clean-hands education into middle school curricula, and promotes student team work.

Project Handwashing (Colorado State University Extension) — www.ext.colostate.edu

Options for 4-6 grade students and additional activities to choose from for K-3 grade students. Includes a bacteria discussion, role playing steps for handwashing, washing hands and viewing under a UV light, a coloring book activity, and pre/post evaluation.

Build Your Own Kit (Minnesota Department of Health) — www.health.state.mn.us

Instructions and list of the materials you need to build a toolkit for teaching handwashing for different grade levels. Includes curriculum, posters, experiments, activity sheets, and other printables.

More Great Resources & Websites

Buzz on Scuzz — www.bam.gov

Learn about how germs on your hands can make you sick, when you should wash your hands, and the ins and outs of handwashing. *Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*

Scrub Club — www.scrubclub.org

Interactive handwashing games and songs, computer wallpaper, screensavers, coloring sheets and posters. *NSF International*

Be a Soaper Hero — www.uwyo.edu/soaperhero

Activities student can do on the site, such as videos, coloring sheets, mazes and games, as well as a teacher tool kits. *University of Wyoming*

Massachusetts Department of Public Health — www.mass.gov

Handwashing lesson plans for kindergarten through sixth grade.

Did You Wash 'Em (Kansas Department of Health and Environment) — <http://www.kdheks.gov>

Direct education and media messages on handwashing, with special emphasis on children and food service. Has teaching module with 12 most common germs. Posters, stickers that can be ordered for a cost.

Glitter Germs Handwashing Demonstration



You need: Shaker of glitter, soap and water, sink or bowl, and towels.
Cinnamon can also be used instead of glitter.

1. Put a small amount of glitter on children's hands.
2. Put children into 2 groups: have group 1 wash their hands with soap and group 2 without soap.
3. Show how soap gets rid of the glitter (germs) better than water alone.
4. Next, put glitter in your hand and then touch the children's hands, shoulders, hair, etc. to show them how the glitter was transferred. Explain how germs are also transferred in this way.
5. Talk about the different germs they may come in contact with and how they make them sick.
6. Hang up a visual reminder about handwashing on the classroom door and near the sink (if there is one in the classroom).

Adapted from Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Books For Younger Children

Buddy Bear's Hand Washing Trouble
Marjorie T. Cooke

Your Skin and Mine
Paul Showers

Wash Your Hands!
Tony Ross

Germs on Their Fingers (also in Spanish)
Wendy Wakefield Ferrin

*Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting
... But Invisible Germs*
Judith Anne Rice

Germs Make Me Sick
Melvin Berger

The Ten Potato Scrub
Marjorie T. Cooke

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