



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Teaching Young Children About Hygiene

Hygiene is another term for “cleanliness,” and generally refers to practices that are beneficial for maintaining health. Effective hygiene is the key to preventing the spread of germs that can cause infectious diseases. As someone caring for a young child, you play an important role in making hygiene a priority. Whether you are following correct hand washing and diaper changing procedures, or regularly cleaning and sanitizing surfaces and toys, you are not only protecting your child’s health (and your own); you are teaching him healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs is to wash hands regularly. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), studies show that correct hand washing can prevent 30% of diarrhea-related sicknesses and 20% of respiratory infections, such as pneumonia. Diarrhea and pneumonia are two of the leading causes of death in children around the world. Hand washing is one of the most important hygiene practices we can teach our children.



In this newsletter, we will discuss hand washing and other good hygiene habits for each age group – infants, toddlers, and preschoolers – and offer tips for teaching and incorporating them into your child’s everyday routine.



This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child’s development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Practicing good hygiene is especially important because young infants have not yet built up a strong immune system and are more susceptible to infections. Furthermore, infants often put their hands, toys, and other objects in their mouth, transferring bacteria as they do so. As you consistently practice good hygiene habits, your infant will learn that this is a natural part of his everyday routine, and he will have an easier time learning to do them on his own later.



Here are some ideas for incorporating good hygiene habits into your infant's everyday routine:

- ♥ **Organize your environment.** Set up your environment to make it easier to practice good hygiene. For example, have a designated area for diaper changing with the necessary wipes and cleaning supplies close by.
- ♥ **Wash hands frequently.** Remember that washing your infant's hands is just as important as washing your own hands. For a very young infant, use two wash cloths – one dampened and soapy for washing, one dampened with water for rinsing, and a towel to dry his hands. Wash his hands after every diaper change, as his hands may become contaminated from the changing area.
- ♥ **Clean and sanitize his environment.** Cleaning, sanitizing, and/or disinfecting surfaces and toys further reduces the spread of infectious diseases. Use a safe bleach/water or other EPA-approved solution.

Activity for Infants: *Let's Brush*

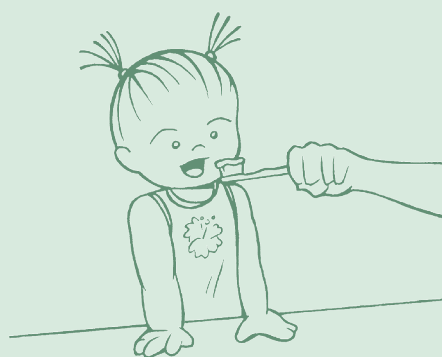
What You Need:

- soft cloth
- A small, soft child-size toothbrush

What to Do:

1. Before your baby's first teeth come out, make it a practice to wipe his gums with a soft cloth after he eats. Talk about what you're doing and why. For example, "We're cleaning your gums to keep your mouth and body healthy."
2. When his first baby teeth start to come out through his gums, gently brush his teeth with a soft-bristled, child-size toothbrush after breakfast and before bedtime to prevent tooth cavities.
3. As he gets older, help him hold the toothbrush and guide him through the motions of brushing his teeth. You can even brush your teeth too, so he can watch and copy you.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

Taking care of your child's hygiene needs evolves from something you do completely for him — to something he is learning to do for himself. With your toddler's growing physical and cognitive abilities, as well as his increasing desire to be independent, this is a perfect time to teach him about healthy hygiene routines.



Some of the hygiene activities you can teach your toddler include helping him wipe his nose with a tissue, wash his face or hands, asking him to put dirty clothes in a hamper, and dressing himself. Here are some ideas for incorporating good hygiene habits into your toddler's everyday routines:

- ♥ **Encourage frequent and proper hand washing.** Praise your toddler's attempts to wash his hands. Place a stool near the sink to help him reach the faucet and provide him with his own personal towel or access to paper towels.
- ♥ **Sings songs to encourage daily hygiene activities** such as the following song, sung to the tune of, *Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush*:

*"This is the way we brush our teeth,
brush our teeth, brush our teeth;*

*This is the way we brush our teeth,
after we've had our dinner."*

Activity for Toddlers: *Hand Washing Poster*

What You Need:

- Poster board
- Markers
- Camera/phone
- Printer to print out photos
- Glue stick

What to Do:

1. Take a photo of your child doing each of the 5 steps of the hand washing procedure: wetting his hands, lathering his hands, scrubbing his hands, rinsing his hands, and drying his hands.
2. Print the photos and talk about the process of hand washing.
3. Together put the photos in order and glue them onto the poster board.
4. Caption each photo with the appropriate hand washing directions: wet, lather, scrub, rinse, dry.
5. Post the board above the sink where your child washes his hands and while he washes his hands, point to the photograph and talk about each step.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

Preschoolers are eager to perform self-care tasks and daily routines on their own. With this enthusiasm, along with his developing small muscle abilities, your preschooler will be able to take care of most of his bathroom routines— such as toileting, brushing his teeth, and washing and drying his own hands. Encourage his growing independence, but adult supervision is still recommended to ensure correct procedures are followed.

Here are some ideas for incorporating good hygiene habits into your preschooler's everyday routines:

- ♥ **Talk about germs.** Read him books about germs and teach him ways to prevent the spread of germs, such as to cover his mouth and use a tissue. Demonstrate by saying, "See how I cover my mouth so I don't spread germs?" Model coughing into your elbow or sleeve. Demonstrate how you wipe a runny nose with a tissue, throw the tissue into a

trashcan, and immediately wash your hands. Let him practice on a stuffed animal or baby doll.

- ♥ **Chores.** Involve your child in daily chores, such as setting the table, taking non-breakable dishes to the sink, wiping the table, washing fruits and vegetables, and sorting laundry.

Here are some tips for encouraging your preschooler's compliance with hygiene activities:

- ♥ Use "first-then" statements. For example, "First wash your hands, then you can eat a snack," or "First brush your teeth, then we will read a story."
- ♥ Offer choices. For example, "Do you want the mint or strawberry flavored toothpaste?"
- ♥ Talk about the time. For example, "In 5 minutes it will be time to brush your teeth." Set a timer for 5 minutes.

Activity for Preschoolers: *I Can Help*

What You Need:

| | |
|--------|---------------------|
| Cups | Forks or chopsticks |
| Plates | Napkins |

What to Do:

1. Have your child help set the table for mealtime.
2. First have him wash his hands clean before he starts.
3. Set one place setting at the table as an example for him to follow. Explain to your child that each person needs one plate, one napkin, one cup, and one fork.
4. Have him count the number of cups, plates, forks, and napkins needed for mealtime.
5. Ask him to place these items in the appropriate places, reminding him to use the place setting you have done as an example.
6. Talk with your child about each family member and the tableware. For example, "Is Daddy's cup the same size as yours? Which one is bigger?" "Popo (grandmother) likes to eat with chopsticks. How many chopsticks does she need?"

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and develops small muscles e.g., fingers, hands, toes and facial muscles
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Feel important and good about himself
- ♥ Learn to perform self care tasks independently

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Follows two-step directions



Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his thinking and problem-solving skills
- ♥ Develop early math skills like quantifying, comparing, sorting, grouping, and ordering

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math and science concepts, fine motor skills, and language development. As you make this recipe with your child, ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Most of all, have fun!

Perfect Pineapple Pops

Adapted from *KidsHealth*

Ingredients:

- 2 cups plain yogurt
- ½ cup canned crushed pineapple (packed in its own juice instead of packed in syrup), drained
- 1 can frozen pineapple or orange-pineapple juice concentrate, thawed
- Small paper cups
- Wooden popsicle sticks
- Plastic wrap

Directions:

1. Put all the ingredients in a medium-sized bowl and mix together.
2. Have your child scoop the mixture into the paper cups. Fill them almost to the top.
3. Put a small piece of plastic wrap across the top of each cup.
4. Using the popsicle stick, poke a hole in the plastic wrap. Stand the stick straight up in the center of the cup.
5. Put the cups in the freezer until the mixture is frozen solid.
6. Remove the plastic wrap and peel away the paper cup. Talk about how the mixture has changed and what the popsicle tastes like.



Resources

Basic Health and Safety Practices: Child Care Provider's Guide

<http://learningtogrowhawaii.org/resources/>
Includes detailed procedures for hand washing; diaper changing; and cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

Fight germs. Wash your hands.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/healthyliving/hygiene/fight-germs-wash-hands.html>
Video by the CDC that demonstrates proper hand washing and shows how hand washing can get rid of germs and chemicals that get on our hands every day.



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Brush, Brush, Brush by Alicia Padron

"Are your teeth clean and white? Do you brush them day and night? Do you brush them up and down? Do you brush them left and right?" This book features simple, rhythmic text, and bold illustrations that make it appealing to young children.

Wash'um by Oahu Head Start Program

Beautiful photographs and text illustrates what we do with our hands and the importance and steps of hand washing.

Preschoolers

Those Mean, Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting but...Invisible Germs

by Judith Anne Rice

Encourage the formation of good health habits in children. Through playful and colorful illustrations, this popular children's book shows the germs that cause illness and how important hand washing is to good health. Includes health information.

Germs Are Not for Sharing by Elizabeth Verdick

This book is a short course for kids on what germs are, what they do, and why it's so important to cover them up, block them from spreading, and wash them down the drain. Simple words complement warm, inviting, full-color illustrations that show real-life situations kids can relate to.



Learning to Grow is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at www.learningtogrowhawaii.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii