



STAYING HEALTHY | 5TH EDITION | 2013

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Breaking the chain of infection

Infection prevention and control in early childhood education and care services

STOPPING THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

In the education and care service that your child attends, the educators and staff try to limit the spread of disease to keep the children and staff healthy.

This fact sheet provides you with some information and things that you can do at home to prevent the spread of disease.

HAND HYGIENE

Hands play an important role in spreading germs.

Hand hygiene is a very effective way to control the spread of infection. Hand hygiene means washing hands with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand rub.

Soap and water

The most effective method of hand hygiene is soap and water. Washing your hands with soap and running water loosens, dilutes and flushes off dirt and germs.

It's very important to remember to dry your hands completely after washing. Damp hands pick up and transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands. Drying your hands thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off.

Alcohol-based hand rubs

Alcohol-based hand rubs are a fast and effective way to remove germs that may have been picked up by touching contaminated surfaces. Alcohol-based hand rubs reduce the number of germs on your hands but they are not as good at removing dirt from your hands. If your hands are visibly dirty, washing with soap and water is the best way to clean your hands.

COUGH/SNEEZE ETIQUETTE

Many germs can be spread through the air by droplets. By covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, you reduce how far the droplets can travel and stop them from contaminating other surfaces or being breathed in by others.

In the past, people were encouraged to cover their coughs and sneezes with their hands. But if you do not clean your hands immediately, germs stay on your hands and can be transferred to other surfaces.

To prevent the spread of germs from coughing and sneezing, cough and sneeze into your inner elbow.

Should you use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, put your tissue/s in the bin straight away and perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.



EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING

The education and care service carries out daily cleaning of the environment. Regular cleaning with water and detergent will remove germs from surfaces and reduce the risk of a person picking up a germ from a potentially contaminated surface.

Using detergent and water and a scrubbing action will loosen and lift the dirt from the surface. The surface should be rinsed with water and left to dry.

Regular environmental cleaning is a very effective way to stop the spread of disease.

USING DISPOSABLE GLOVES

You may see educators and other staff wearing disposable gloves in their daily routines. This is because germs can spread quickly in education and care services, and gloves provide a protective barrier against germs. Gloves can be used for:

- ▶ Nappy changing
- ▶ Managing cuts and abrasions
- ▶ Cleaning up body fluids such as urine, faeces, saliva, vomit or blood.

At home, you will most likely not use disposable gloves. Effective hand hygiene, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, is a good alternative to wearing gloves at home.

IN SUMMARY

There are a number of things you can do to help lessen the spread of infections at home in a manner similar to what is happening in early childhood education and care services:

- ▶ Perform hand hygiene. This can be with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ▶ Ensure hands are dry after washing hands with soap and water. Damp hands transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands.
- ▶ Alcohol-based hand rubs are an effective way to perform hand hygiene however, if hands are visibly dirty, use soap and water.
- ▶ Coughing or sneezing into your elbow will help lessen the spread of germs.
- ▶ If you cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissue straight away and then perform hand hygiene.
- ▶ Routine cleaning of surfaces with detergent and water is an effective way of removing germs from surfaces.
- ▶ Gloves are sometimes used in education and care services to provide a protective barrier against germs.

MORE INFORMATION

Consumer guides are also available on:

- ▶ What cause infection?
- ▶ Exclusion periods explained

REFERENCES

NHMRC (2012) *Staying healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* found at www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55.

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