

5 Tips to Encourage Children to Wash Their Hands



Getting young children to wash their hands can be a battle. Practicing good hand hygiene is a lesson that children need to be taught at a young age – a lesson they're never too young to start learning.

Here are five tips to help encourage your children to wash their hands:

- 1. SING.** While washing their hands, encourage children to sing a song, for example the “ABC’s,” “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” “Happy Birthday,” or the hook to their favorite song. The goal is to sing for at least 20 seconds, which is how long you should wash your hands to remove germs.
- 2. REWARD.** Hang a sticker chart in their bedroom or bathroom and add their favorite sticker every time they wash their hands. This tactic establishes children to view handwashing as a rewarding activity.

- 3. MAKE IT EASY.** Ensure that they can reach the sink, faucet handles, and soap. If these items are too high and out of reach, invest in a footstool. This will encourage a child’s independence while washing their hands and help them establish a regular healthy habit.

- 4. PLAY.** Let your child keep small, waterproof toys near the sink so they can play while washing. This allows children to see handwashing as a fun activity.

- 5. SHOW.** Adults – don’t forget to wash your hands, too! Children learn from what you do, so set the example by washing whenever you’d want them to wash. If they are washing, you can join in, too.

Keeping hands clean with soap and water is one of the most important things anyone can do to stay healthy. Teach children to follow these five steps every time:

- 1.** Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- 2.** Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- 3.** Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Remind them to sing or hum their 20-second song of choice.
- 4.** Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- 5.** Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



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If soap and water aren't readily available, encourage the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Baby wipes do not contain alcohol or other germ-killing ingredients, so they should not be used to clean hands. Surface disinfecting wipes are not meant to be used on skin.

Children should understand the importance of using hand sanitizer as part of a good hand hygiene regimen and should be supervised while using it.

The entire hand sanitizing process should take around 15-20 seconds with a well-formulated product:

- 1.** Apply enough alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the palm of your child's hand to cover the surface of their entire hand. (Adults should use approximately the size of a quarter.)
- 2.** Rub the sanitizer into the palms of your hands, fingers, back and front of hands and thumbs.
- 3.** Continue rubbing hands together until they are dry.

If established early, children can maintain these healthy habits even when you're not around to enforce them and throughout their lives.

To learn more about hand hygiene best practices visit the PURELL® Brand Well-Being Center.

