

Hand Cleaning Procedures

ECERS hand cleaning procedures are based on national standards written in part by the American Academy of Pediatrics. They are outlined in the All About the ECERS-3 book (p. 89) and updated in the [DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-3](#). The learning that happens when children are encouraged to wash their hands correctly addresses **EFQ Element 2: Create Safe and Positive Environments**.

There are often physical building constraints that can make these requirements difficult. Although programs may decide that hand cleaning should not be a focus given other program goals, this document explains the procedures that are aligned with these national standards.

Proper hand cleaning is an important tool for fighting and preventing diseases. Center for Disease Control statistics show that infectious diseases account for more than 164 million lost school days each year in grades K-12 and the impact is felt even more strongly in the prekindergarten year. According to a study in the Journal of Pediatric Healthcare, correct handwashing by children and adults can result in a 17% reduction in respiratory infections for young children, preventing thousands of colds per year, which often affects student attendance.

Hand sanitizer is also effective if hands are not visibly soiled, the product contains 60 – 95% alcohol, manufacturer's instructions are followed, and children are closely supervised while using it.

Proper handwashing steps:

1. Moisten hands under running water;
2. Apply liquid soap;
3. Rub hands for approximately 20 seconds out of the flow of water, making a foamy lather;
4. Dry with a clean disposable towel;
5. Use disposable paper towel to turn off faucet; and,
6. Throw disposable paper towel in a hands free trashcan.

These procedures should be followed by all children and staff at the following times:

- Upon arrival and re-entering the classroom from outside;
- Before handling food (gloves are not acceptable as a substitute);
- After toileting;
- Before and after water play;
- After sand or messy play;
- After dealing with bodily fluids, such as coughing; and,
- After touching objects that could spread germs such as trash can lids or pets.