

POLICY AIM

Sweetpeas is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all educators, staff, volunteers, families, and children by providing a safe and healthy environment. Effective hand hygiene significantly reduces the risk of infection and is therefore of the utmost importance. We aim to implement specific hand washing hygiene practices regularly to minimise the risks associated with cross infection of viral and bacterial borne diseases.

RATIONALE

Having and encouraging effective hygiene practices in early childhood is essential for reducing the risk of infection. Helping children to develop appropriate personal hygiene habits, such as hand hygiene, will become embedded as they grow and develop. It is important to work with families to ensure children follow simple hygiene rules by incorporating effective hygiene strategies in both the Service and home environment.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Children
- Staff / Educators
- Families
- Visitors / Volunteers
- Students
- Management

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Standard 2.1 (Health) - *Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.*
- Element 2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures) - *Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.*
- Standard 2.2 (Safety) - *Each child is protected.*
- Element 2.2.1 (Supervision) - *At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Administration of Medication Policy
- Bathroom Procedures
- Bottle Preparation Procedure
- Cleaning Procedures
- Food Preparation, Safety and Storage Policy
- Food Safety and Hygiene Procedure
- Illness Policy
- Incident, Injury, and Trauma Policy
- Infectious Diseases Policy
- Nappy Change and Toileting Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Regulation 77 - Health, Hygiene and safe food practices
- Regulation 88 - Infectious diseases
- Regulation 93 - Administration of medication
- Regulation 106 - Laundry and hygiene facilities
- Regulation 109 - Toilet and hygiene facilities
- Regulation 168 - Education and care service must have policies and procedures

TERMINOLOGY

- **Hygiene** - conditions or practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing disease, especially through cleanliness.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **NHMRC** - National Health and Medical Research Council

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

Infection can be spread through direct physical contact between people, airborne droplets from coughing and sneezing or from contact with surfaces and objects. Children come into contact with a number of other children and adults, toys, eating utensils, and equipment whilst being cared for in early education and care services. This high degree of physical contact with people and the environment creates a higher risk of children being exposed to and spreading infectious illnesses. Whilst it may not be possible for services to prevent the spread of all infections, we aim to create a hygienic environment to minimise the spread of diseases and infections.

Effective hand washing is a vital strategy in the prevention of spreading many infectious diseases. Research emphasises effective and frequent handwashing as the single most important way to reduce the spread of bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites that may infect educators, staff and children in early childhood services and in our general population.

Micro-organisms such as bacteria, germs, viruses, and parasites are present on the hands at all times and live in the oil that is naturally produced on our hands. The use of soap or detergent and water remove most of these organisms and decreases the risk of cross infection.

Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements, standards and guidelines to support the effectiveness of our hand washing policy. We aim to educate and encourage children to wash their hands frequently and effectively which will help to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases, adhering to guidelines provided in *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* and recommendations from the Department of Health to guide best practice.

TO ENSURE THE GREATEST LEVEL OF PERSONAL HYGIENE OUR SERVICE WILL ENSURE:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival to the Service or, use the alcohol-based sanitiser under adult supervision.
- hands are thoroughly dried using hand towel and disposed of in the bin provided.
- disposable tissues are used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use.
- hands are washed following the use of tissues.
- hands are washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet.
- signage is provided to prompt visitors and children to wash their hands regularly and effectively when visiting our Service.

A NOMINATED SUPERVISOR / RESPONSIBLE PERSON WILL ENSURE:

- all staff wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds regularly throughout the day.
- all staff wash their hands:
 - before and after eating and handling food
 - before and after preparing bottles for infants
 - before and after applying sunscreen or other lotions to children
 - after using the toilet
 - after wiping a child's nose
 - after blowing their own nose
 - after helping children use the toilet
 - after touching animals
 - after cleaning high touch surfaces- (tables, light switches, door handles, computers, iPads)
 - after cleaning or mopping floors
 - after changing learning environments - rooms, indoor/outdoor
 - whenever their hands are visibly dirty (after gardening, mud play, painting)
 - before leaving the Service at the end of the day
- educators and staff adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures.
- educators and staff wash hands before and after wearing disposable gloves when:

- nappy changing
- preparing food
- administering medication
- administering first aid
- cleaning spills- faeces, vomit or blood
- cleaning with disinfectant or chemicals
- after handling garbage and/or contaminated materials (nappies and other waste products)

EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- children are explicitly taught the correct process of handwashing.
- children are carefully supervised when handwashing.
- children are reminded to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.
- they model effective handwashing procedures.
- the required equipment and resources are easily accessible and appropriate to use- liquid soap, running water, paper towel.
- information about routines and songs for hand washing are shared with families to encourage routines at home.

We believe the hygiene practices of children being cared for should be as rigorous as those of staff and educators. Our environment supports the creation of appropriate healthy hygiene habits during early childhood to ensure lifelong healthy decisions and actions.

Strategies educators will use to encourage effective hand hygiene practice include:

- talking about the importance of hand hygiene.
- talking about when hand washing is appropriate and why (in an age-appropriate manner).
- singing a song or reciting a poem/rap as a guide to how long it should take to wash hands (e.g. singing happy birthday twice is a sufficient time frame).
- using a clear visual poster with step-by-step instructions.
- using positive language.
- encouraging and using positive reinforcement.
- ensuring equipment is accessible.
- providing clear simple routines.
- giving children sufficient time to practice and develop their skills.
- ensuring adequate supervision and assistance is available when required.
- use STEM opportunities to teach about germs and prevention (i.e.: pepper and soap experiment).

HAND DRYING

Effective hand drying is just as important as comprehensive hand washing. Research states that wet hands can pick up and transfer up to 1000 times more bacteria than dry hands. Drying hands thoroughly also helps remove any germs that may not have been rinsed off.

Our Service provides children, staff, and educators with disposable paper towel to ensure effective hand hygiene. Bins are provided with foot control lids to dispose of used paper towel. Where possible, our Services aims to find sustainable alternatives to paper towel that may harm the environment.

HANDWASHING PROCEDURE

1. Wet hands with running water (preferably warm, for comfort).
2. Apply soap to hands.
3. Lather soap and rub hands for at least 15 seconds, including:
 - a. palm to palm,
 - b. back of hands,
 - c. in between fingers and back of fingers
 - d. around thumbs and
 - e. tips of fingers.
4. Rinse hands with water.
5. Dry hands thoroughly.
6. Your hands are clean. (NHMRC, 2013)



ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITISER

Where possible, staff will use soap and water to clean their hands however, if this is not possible and hands are not greasy or visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser may be used.

Hand sanitiser must be kept out of reach of children at all times as it can be very dangerous if swallowed.

Directions should be followed on how to use the sanitiser correctly. The effectiveness of an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to kill microorganisms or prevent their growth should be at least 60% alcohol. As per *National Regulations*, a safety data sheet will be kept on file for any alcohol-based hand sanitiser used in the Service.

HAND SANITISER PROCEDURE

1. Apply the amount of hand sanitiser recommended by the manufacturer to palms of dry hands.
2. Rub hands together, making sure you cover in between fingers, around thumbs and under nails.
3. Rub until hands are dry (alcohol-based sanitisers are self-drying, so you do not need a paper towel or hand towel). This should take about 20 seconds. (NHMRC, 2024)

RELATED INFORMATION / RESOURCES

- Be a Soapy Hero! <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/soapy-hero>
- Hand Hygiene Guidelines: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-guidelines/preventing-infection#toc_129
- The Wiggles: The Handwashing Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecdX4MM4Sg0>

REFERENCES

- Better Health Channel - <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Food Safety Standards - <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the National Quality Framework.
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2024). Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Ed.).
- NSW Food Authority - <https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/>
- Revised National Quality Standard.
- SafeWork NSW - <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/>
- Sweetpeas Philosophy

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	Adapted policy from previous Sweetpeas policy	February 2017	Cassandra Way (Educator/Admin) Janine Evans (Director)
1.1.	No changes required	February 2018	Cassandra Way (Educator/Admin)

Handwashing Policy

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.2.	- Updated NQS - No other changes required	June 2019	Janine Evans (Director)
1.3.	Updated for COVID-19 recommendations	July 2020	Janine Evans (Director)
1.4.	- Policy reviewed and updated to reflect current COVID-19 recommendations - Reintroduction of COVID handwashing policy	July 2021	Janine Evans (Director)
1.5.	No changes required	May 2022	Janine Evans (Director)
1.6.	- No changes required - Due for template change	May 2023	Janine Evans (Managing Director)
2.	- Cosmetic changes for new policy template - Added new sections as per policy template - Added sections on Hand Drying, Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitiser, Hand Sanitiser Procedure and Related Info/Resources - Removed COVID-19 specific section - Updated References and checked and updated all hotlinks	March 2024	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)
2.1.	- Updated Related Policies list - Checked and updated all hotlinks and references - Removed some more COVID-19 advice - Updated hand sanitiser procedure to match latest NHMRC advice	March 2025	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)

NHMRC HANDWASHING POSTER

How to wash hands

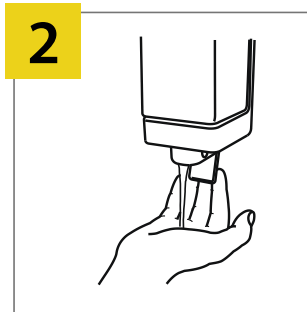
STAYING HEALTHY | 5TH EDITION | 2013



A hand wash should take around 30 seconds.



Wet hands with running water (preferably warm, for comfort).



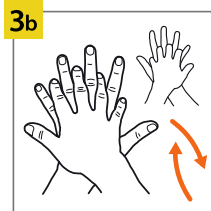
Apply soap to hands.



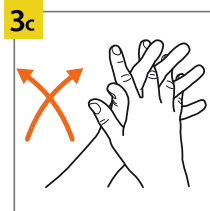
Lather soap and rub hands for at least 15 seconds, including:



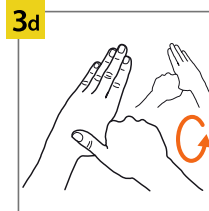
palm to palm,



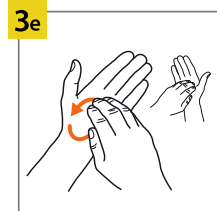
back of hands,



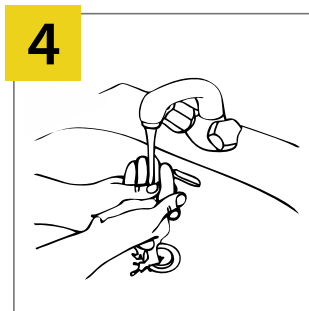
in between fingers
and back of fingers,



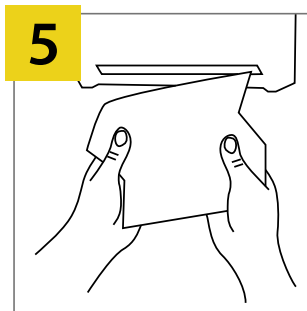
around thumbs and



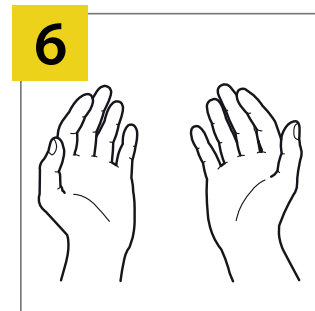
tips of fingers.



Rinse hands with water.



Dry hands thoroughly.



Your hands are clean.

THIS POSTER REFERENCES THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S 'HOW TO HANDWASH?' POSTER NHMRC Ref. CH55g Printed June 2013



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

NHMRC

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA