

# Fun with Handwashing Education

An Educator's Reference Desk Lesson Plan

---

**Submitted by:** Dr. Brian. F. Geiger, Dr. Lynn Artz, Dr. Cynthia J. Petri, Dr. Scott D. Winnail, & Dr. J. Walter Mason

**Email:** bgeiger@uab.edu

**School/University/Affiliation:** University of Alabama at Birmingham Schools of Education and Public Health, Birmingham, AL

**Date:** August 20, 2000

---

**Grade Level:** Preschool Education, Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4

**Subject(s):**

- Health/Process Skills

**Duration:** Two 30-45-minute sessions

**Description:** Primary prevention of contagious diseases includes teaching young children and their caregivers about personal hygiene behaviors. There are five key times to wash hands with soap and water: BEFORE eating, AFTER sneezing or coughing, AFTER playing outdoors, AFTER playing with pets, and AFTER using the toilet. This lesson presents a variety of fun and low-cost techniques for handwashing education.

**Goals:** From the National Health Education Standards One and Three (JCNHES, 1995):

1. Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will identify the five most important times to wash their hands.
2. Each student will demonstrate proper technique for washing hands.
3. Students will practice washing their hands correctly at appropriate times during the day.

**Materials:**

- National Health Education Standards (JCNHES, 1995)
- photographs, doll, or other illustrations of sick children
- glitter
- drawings, photos, or slides of common pathogenic organisms
- colored construction paper
- stencils

- paint
- markers or crayons
- novelty stickers
- stapler
- glue
- storybook of hygiene behaviors
- bulletin boards
- facial tissues
- sink and water
- liquid soap and paper towels
- letter to parents
- poster to record students' healthy habits (optional)
- wallpaper samples (optional)

**Procedure:**

Use photos, drawings, cartoons, or a doll to illustrate a sick child. Ask students to describe how children can become sick. Define the word germ, i.e., very small bacteria, viruses, or fungi that make you feel sick. Ask students to describe common symptoms of illness, e.g., achy, tired feeling, upset stomach, diarrhea. For older children, show photos or slides of common pathogenic organisms, e.g., salmonella, or a cold virus.

Ask students to identify where we find germs. Emphasize contact is possible when playing outdoors, handling pets, and sharing toys. Describe how our bodies use our skin and respiratory system to fight off infection.

Illustrate common methods of germ transmission, i.e., sneezing, coughing, touching toys or play surfaces, food contact surfaces, and the toilet. Invite students to draw a picture of a germ as they see it.

Sprinkle glitter into both hands. Discuss how glitter represents germs. Move around the room touching students, toys, desks, and other objects. Ask students to describe what happened to the glitter originally in your hands. For older children, play a game of charades. Select one student to act as a child; the others will play the "germs." Germs position themselves around the classroom and touch objects and the child as he or she moves around the room. Count the number of times germs touch things in five minutes.

Ask students to identify when they should wash their hands to kill germs. Use drawings, photos, dolls, or storyboard to illustrate correct answers: BEFORE eating, AFTER sneezing or coughing, AFTER playing outdoors, AFTER playing with pets, and AFTER using the toilet.

Emphasize the important habit of using tissues when sneezing or coughing and throwing away used tissues. Use classroom or bathroom sinks to demonstrate proper technique for hand washing. Turn on warm water, then squirt liquid soap into one palm. Scrub hands together for 10-15 seconds, lathering front and back. Rinse hands and dry with a paper towel. Turn off the faucet with the paper towel and discard. Students should NEVER share a cloth towel or washcloth.

Divide students into pairs and practice handwashing. Make it fun by singing a song aloud such as "Ten Little Fingers" sung to the tune of "Ten Little Indians." Make hand washing a part of your daily classroom routine. Sing a song while lining up before snack or mealtime. Award novelty stickers and chart progress of students as they demonstrate proper technique.

Send a letter home to parents reviewing the five key times to wash hands, along with the proper technique for handwashing. As an optional follow-up activity, students can create storybooks using construction paper (also wallpaper samples) and stencils of common objects (e.g., child, sink, pet, house, toys, food, toilet, soap). Display a model storyboard prepared in advance of the lesson. Encourage students to illustrate good personal health habits in their storybooks, for instance, washing hands before lunch. Decorate cover and pages with stencils, paint, crayons or markers, glitter, and glue. Post storybooks on bulletin boards to encourage others to learn more about handwashing.

**Assessment:** Student participation in class discussion, songs, and games, along with completion of storybooks. Observe students as they practice washing their hands - record progress on a chart.

**Other References:**

1. The American Red Cross, Orange Co. Chapt. 1996. Don't Get Sick, Wash Up Quick! Santa Ana, CA.
2. Joint Commission on National Health Education Standards . 1995. Washington, D.C.
3. Meredith, S., et al. 1993. You and Your Body . EDC Publishing, Tulsa, OK.
4. Soap and Detergent Assn. 1990. Hooray for Handwashing: A Program for Early Childhood Settings . NY, NY.
5. Spence, S. 1995. Staying Clean and Healthy: Creative Activities for Teaching Basic Personal Hygiene Habits . Health Edco, WRS Group, Inc., Waco, TX.
6. Squibb, B. & Yardley, K. 1999. Playing Healthy, Staying Healthy: A Prevention Program for Contagious Disease . Early Childhood Education Journal, 26(3), 143-147.