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For Healthy Schools

## Tips for Teaching Hygiene in the Classroom

### OVERVIEW OF GERMS AND COMMON ILLNESSES IN CHILDREN:

- Common respiratory infections often result in coughs and colds that are relatively harmless and do not require treatment
- When children are first exposed to germs in a group setting (e.g., childcare/school), their immune systems are still developing and may take time to respond to common germs that cause infection
- When older children first enter group settings (e.g., students entering school who haven't been in childcare), they're more likely to get frequent infections in the first few years than their classmates

### HELP KEEP YOUR STUDENTS HEALTHY WITH THESE IMPORTANT LESSONS:

- To help keep students from spreading germs, focus on simple, yet effective measures that **limit the spread of germs**. In the classroom, make sure students **routinely wash their hands, cover their coughs and sneezes** (with their arms rather than their hands), **dispose of tissues** and **avoid sharing cups or utensils**
- Handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs. While a quick rinse may suffice for removing paint, **soap and water is a must** when it comes to getting rid of germs. To effectively wash away germs, teach your students to use soap and to scrub in between fingers, under nails and on both sides of their hands for at least 20 seconds
- Focus classroom handwashing routines on the key times that your students' hands are most likely to spread germs. This includes after going to the bathroom, blowing noses, coughing or sneezing, playing outside, touching used tissues, touching a class pet, touching garbage, and before eating or handling food. **Consider having your students wash their hands more frequently during cold and flu season**
- Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to helping prevent infectious diseases in schools, as

reinforced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While cleaning is important for removing dirt from objects or surfaces in the classroom, it does not actually kill germs. Disinfecting wipes like **Lysol Disinfecting Wipes** can be a practical way to target and kill illness-causing germs. For the sake of both safety and effectiveness, always use EPA-registered disinfectants, including disinfecting wipes, and be sure to use them according to the instructions on the label. **Focus on wiping frequently touched surfaces in the classroom, such as door handles, sink handles and even tables and chairs<sup>1</sup>**

### KEY STEPS TO HANDWASHING:

**It's important that children follow these eight steps to ensure they are washing their hands properly:**

1. Wet hands and apply soap. Rub palms together until soap is bubbly
2. Rub each palm over the back of the other hand
3. Rub between fingers on each hand
4. Rub backs of fingers (interlocked)
5. Rub around each of their thumbs
6. Rub both palms with fingertips
7. Rinse hands under clean, running water
8. Dry hands with a clean, dry towel

Encourage them to sing "Happy Birthday" twice while washing, so that they know how long it takes to get rid of the germs that can make them ill.





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### KEY PRACTICES TO SHARE WITH PARENTS TO HELP PROTECT STUDENTS FROM GERMS:

- There are a few steps you can take to help protect the children in your classroom. Encourage parents to make sure children wash their hands when returning from school to minimize germs being brought home
- It's also important to keep schoolbags clean and to regularly bring home and wash gym clothes. Germs can be killed by washing clothes at a high temperature (140°F or higher). If you need to wash at a lower temperature, add a laundry sanitizer

### NO AMOUNT OF CLEAN IS TOO CLEAN:

- The practice of increased hygiene, such as handwashing and surface disinfection, has been scientifically shown to reduce infection and decrease levels of illness, and does not correlate with any increase in atopic (allergic) diseases
- Exposure to some microbes is an important step in the process of “natural immunization” for children. However, exposure to harmful pathogens that can cause serious infections is unnecessary and preventable by good hygiene habits

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