

# Strategies to Teach Handwashing Skills

## General Information

Please refer to all the steps and recommendations identified by the Government of Canada and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for proper handwashing. This includes:

**Step 1:** Wet hands with safe running water

**Step 2:** Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

**Step 3:** Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds

**Step 4:** Rinse thoroughly with running water

**Step 5:** Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand drier as available

- Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom/ toilets and whenever your hands are visibly dirty.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty.
- Hand sanitizer is poisonous and should not be used with a person who tends to mouth or lick their hand(s). If someone is known to mouth and eat items, ensure any hand sanitizer is safely and securely stored away.

## Strategies to Teach Proper Handwashing

- Post a poster to remind them of the steps to follow
- Try using a social story to help teach the how, when and why of handwashing
- Complete the task beside them (modelling) or with them (hand over hand) to help them understand how to complete the steps
- Praise and use reward/incentives when they have completed the steps successfully
- Set a timer to ensure they wash for at least 20 seconds
- Try singing a song to promote handwashing for the recommended duration
- Try putting a small amount of glitter in students' hands and have them wash and follow the proper handwashing steps. This will help them see and learn how it takes time and thorough rubbing to efficiently clean their hands.

## Strategies that Reinforce and Promote Proper Handwashing

- Teach about good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow, and keeping hands to self (instead of touching items, walls, etc.), as this helps to minimize the frequency needed of washing hands
- Encourage children to still “practice” washing their hands, even when they are using hand sanitizer (for duration and method)
- Develop a way to track hand washing (I.e. app, chart) and reward for frequent/appropriate hand washing
- Post a poster reminding people of the steps when washing their hands