

Level: Preschool
Cost: None
Mess factor: None
Suggested location: Bathroom



Children will experience:

- Taking care of his or her personal needs
- Engaging in healthy practices

Materials:

- Tissue box
- Soap
- Low-hanging towel
- Garbage can
- Step stool
- Books about germs. Here are some suggested titles, but any that are appropriate for young children will do!
 - *Germs Are Not for Sharing*, by E. Verdick
 - *Germs Make Me Sick!*, by M. Berger
 - *Germs! Germs! Germs!*, by B. Katz



Beginning:



Begin by reading a book about germs to your children. Talk about the story when you are finished reading. Ask questions such as the following:

- Do you remember where germs come from?
- Where do you think germs are on your body?
- What do you think we can do to get rid of germs?

Next take the children to another part of the house where you have placed a box of tissues on a low shelf so they can reach it. Show them how to get one tissue to blow their nose and then where to throw it out.



Then say something like “Once you blow your nose, you have to wash your hands because some germs might have sneaked onto them! I have something exciting to show you in the bathroom! Let’s go!” Lead children to the bathroom and show them the step stool (this could be a store-bought stool, a thick piece of wood, or even a low chair they can climb up to). Show them how they can now step up to the sink and wash their own hands to get rid of the germs! Teach them how to use the bar soap or one squirt of pump soap. Have them sing the ABCs song one time as they scrub. Show them how to dry their hands and then turn off the faucet.

Middle:

Now, provide a model for children by washing your hands while children sing the ABCs song for you!

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End:

Ask children if they can think of another way to stay healthy. Depending on what they say, you might be able to have them help you carry out these ideas. For example, if they say “keep our clothes clean,” they could help you fold laundry or pour the soap in.



Cleanup:

None! You are already clean!

Younger children:

- Give one-on-one help as children wash their hands, by helping them scrub. Make a game of it! Scrub fast-fast, fast or slow, then slow-slow. Come up with your own tune!
- Let children have fun washing their baby doll or plastic toys in soap and water.



Older children:

- Make a list of times during the day to wash hands. A few examples might include after touching a caged pet and when coming in from outside. Have children help you write some words, or guide them in sounding out the letter sounds. Post the list in the bathroom or near a sink they can use.

Hints:

- Young children need to feel independent. They will love being able to reach the faucet on their own! Be patient. Sometimes they like to play a little in the water or take more than one squirt of soap, but the pay-off is worth it. They will be learning personal care skills that will keep them and other family members healthy!



More!

- You can also teach children how to cough or sneeze into their elbow instead of into their hand.
- Have children help you in the kitchen by assisting with cooking something simple. Remind them, “The first thing we do is to wash hands!”
- Continue reading the healthy-themed books to reinforce children’s personal care skills.



Special Needs Accommodations:

- If a faucet is difficult for children to climb to or reach, provide a simple jar of hand disinfectant they can easily reach.
- Help children blow their nose by giving them a warning like “Okay, I need to help you blow your nose...here I go!”