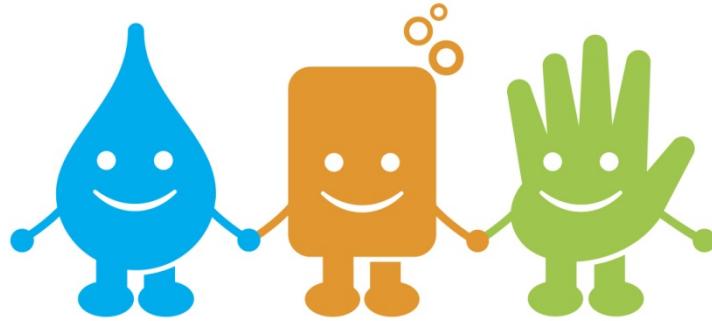


From the Health Clinic



Mrs. Maureen Earner (mearner@stambroseschool.org)



Why Is Hand Washing So Important?

Children do not always listen when parents tell them to wash their hands before eating, after using the bathroom, or when they come inside from playing.

But it is a message worth repeating - **hand washing is by far the best way to keep children from getting sick** and prevent the spread of germs.

How Do Germs Spread?

Germs can spread many ways, including:

- touching dirty hands
- changing dirty diapers
- through contaminated water and food

- through droplets in the air released during a cough or sneeze
- on contaminated surfaces
- through contact with a sick person's body fluids

When children come into contact with germs, they can become infected just by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. And once they are infected, it is usually just a matter of time before the whole family comes down with the same illness.

How Do Clean Hands Help Health?

Good hand washing is the first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses - from the common cold to more serious infections, such as meningitis, bronchiolitis, the flu, hepatitis A, and many types of diarrhea.

What Is the Best Way to Wash Hands?

Here's how to scrub those germs away. Teach this to your children - or better yet, wash your hands together often so they learn how important this good habit is:

1. Wash your hands in **warm water**. Make sure the water is not too hot for little hands.
2. **Use soap** and lather up for about 20 seconds (antibacterial soap is not necessary - any soap will do).
3. Make sure you **get in between the fingers** and under the nails where germs like to hang out. And don't forget the wrists!
4. **Rinse and dry** well with a clean towel.

When Should Children Wash Their Hands?

To stop the spread of germs in your family, make regular hand washing a rule for everyone, especially:

- before eating and cooking
- after using the bathroom
- after cleaning around the house
- after touching animals, including family pets
- before and after visiting or taking care of any sick friends or relatives

- after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
- after being outside (playing, gardening, walking the dog, etc.)

Do not underestimate the power of hand washing! The few seconds you spend at the sink could save you trips to the doctor's office.

