

# Parenting News



## Wash Your Hands!

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by Cille D'Ascenzo  
Licensing Resource Consultant  
EL Paso Child Care Licensing Division

**D**id you know that proper handwashing is the single most effective thing you can do to stop the spread of disease in both adults and children? And did you know that 60% of adults do not wash their hands frequently or correctly? Give your child a head start on healthy lifelong habits by teaching him to wash his hands properly.

**Children share germs in many ways.** They put their hands in their mouths, share toys, play in the dirt, and usually enjoy affectionate hugs and kisses. You can't avoid all germs, but you can help stop the spread of disease and infection. Help your child stay healthy by practicing proper handwashing together.

**The best way to prevent diseases is to wash your hands!** Teach your child to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water. Liquid soap is best, as bar soaps may have germs from the person who used it before you.

**Show your child how to make soap "bubbles"** and rub them all over hands, wrists, between the fingers, and under fingernails. Make sure hands are washed long enough to "*wash the germs away*" (15 to 20 seconds) by singing a handwashing song together. The ABC song and "*This Is the Way We Wash Our Hands,*" sung to the tune of "*Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush,*" are good handwashing songs!

**Wash hands under running water.** Purchase an inexpensive, plastic liquid soap dispenser that appeals to a child. Often these dispensers have fish or other colorful motifs that become mobile when the soap is dispensed – and thus encourage more frequent washing.

**Add a little science discovery to the handwashing** experience by purchasing an inexpensive, large magnifying glass (often available at a dollar store) and let your child investigate his hands for germs, both before and after washing. Don't forget to explore under those fingernails!

**Be a good example to your children.** Children watch you and learn from what you do. Always wash your hands before eating or preparing meals or snacks – and have your child wash his hands before helping or eating. Always wash your hands after using the toilet and teach your child to do this also. Reinforce good handwashing with stickers or stars and lots of words of praise. Stay healthy together!