



## COVID-19 Planning Considerations

### Hand Hygiene in Schools

Hand washing remains the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. The school setting should prepare to reinforce these behaviors and routines into both the educational curriculum and student schedule. Schools should also prepare and equip accessible locations for hand hygiene practices throughout the building. **Hand washing should meet the needs of the individual student and may require other creative solutions based on age, ability, and accessibility.**

#### When students and staff should wash hands

- Upon arrival to school
- Before and after handling or removing facial coverings
- Before and after touching eyes, nose, or mouth
- Prior to changing locations or classrooms
- After using the bathroom
- Immediately upon coming inside from playing outdoors
- Before and after touching high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, handrails, tables, etc.)
- Before and after touching shared equipment/supplies (e.g., electronics, art supplies, sensory play, etc.)
- Before and after preparing food or drinks, handling food, eating, or feeding students
- After helping a student use the bathroom
- Before and after cleaning (e.g., desks, tables, etc.)
- After touching animals or participating in environmental education activities
- Before dismissal

#### Tips for school to consider

- The use of no-touch soap/hand sanitizer dispensers and no-touch foot pedal trash cans are recommended.
- Develop processes to frequently check and refill restrooms throughout the day to ensure working water, safe water temperatures, and supply of hand soap and paper towels.
- Clean and disinfect bathrooms frequently.
- Strategically place hand sanitizer stations in areas where they may be frequently used (e.g., at building entrance, classrooms, hallways, near exits, etc.)
- Develop processes to frequently check and refill hand sanitizing stations.
- Reinforce and monitor hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Consider supervision of safe student use of hand sanitizer when appropriate.
- Consider accessibility of both sinks and hand sanitizer dispensers. All students and staff need to be able to access or have assistance to access each.

- Create a plan for students needing assistance with hand washing (e.g., developmental age, cognition, limited mobility, impulsivity). *This could include the teacher or extra adult performing the hand hygiene for the student.*
- Observe hand washing/sanitizing at regular intervals.
- Build routines of hand hygiene into the daily school schedule for all students and staff.
- Add 5 minutes to lunch and recess periods to ensure students have time to wash their hands with soap and water.
- Build disease-prevention practices into daily schedules.
- Consider use of CDC health promotion materials including developmentally appropriate posters and graphics <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html>

## Soap and water

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. Washing with soap and water should be used whenever hands are visibly dirty and after using the bathroom.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for **at least 20 seconds**.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean, single-use disposable towel or air dry them.

## Hand sanitizer

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However, sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains **at least 60% alcohol** can be used if soap and water are not available.

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Continue to rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds. Do not rinse or wipe off hand sanitizer before it's dry.

## Resources

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Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health. A Strong and Healthy Start, Safety and Health Guidance for Reopening Schools, Fall 2020.  
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<https://globalhandwashing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID19-Knowledge-Map.pdf>