

# Worcestershire Handwashing Strategy: **PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**CLEAN  
HANDS**  **SAFE  
HANDS**



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## BACKGROUND

As we all know, keeping our hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid becoming ill and spreading germs to others. Handwashing campaigns have been particularly prevalent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as COVID-19 can be spread from one person to another by contaminated hands.

Good hand washing can help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infections, including norovirus, salmonellosis, and respiratory infections, such as influenza, colds and coronavirus.

**In 2021 there was a considerable rise in the prevalence of norovirus. Many people are unaware that hand sanitisers are NOT an effective protection against this common sickness bug.**

Hand sanitisers should be used in addition to washing with soap and water and only as an alternative when soap and water is not available. Although hand sanitisers provide a convenient addition to hand cleanliness which proves advantageous during the COVID-19 pandemic, they should not replace the need to wash our hands with soap and water, which is still the most effective way to keep our hands clean.

Teaching children about good hygiene during childhood helps to embed healthy habits, which contribute to lifelong good health. This toolkit suggests ideas which support the importance of hand washing, offering activities to encourage children to remain regular handwashers as part of their everyday routine.

This toolkit has been designed specifically for use by children in primary school classrooms.



## WHEN SHOULD WE WASH OUR HANDS?

Before we get started on ideas to encourage children to keep their hands clean, it's good to remember the key times to wash our hands:

### Key times to wash hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food.
- Before and after eating food.
- After using the toilet.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing our nose.
- After children's 'play-time'.
- After handling worn masks and before handling clean masks.
- When returning from a public place, such as a playground or a shop.
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhoea.
- After changing nappies or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After caring for someone sick.
- After touching animals or pets.

# HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

The NHS recommends that we should wash our hands for around 20 seconds (roughly the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice). Sometimes showing children why they need to wash their hands is the best way to encourage hand washing.

Recently there have been some great lessons in handwashing techniques, including the ‘How to wash your hand’s’ NHS song which is available below and is ideal for early years and key stage 1.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9VjeIWLnEg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9VjeIWLnEg)

Older children may prefer the following version:

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/)

As we know, children benefit from easy to remember instructions. Explain simply (e.g. as below) how germs like to get into all the little nooks and crannies of our hands, which is why it is important to wash them properly.

1. **Lather your hands using liquid soap.**
2. **Spread the lather around your hands, fingers and nails.**
3. **Scrub the tips of your fingers.**
4. **Wash all over – including right around the thumb and the backs of fingers.**
5. **Rinse off the lather and dry thoroughly.**



## 6. WHAT TO USE TO KEEP HANDS CLEAN:

### Soap and water is better than hand sanitiser!

Alcohol-based hand sanitisers are effective against some viruses (such as coronavirus); however, they are not effective against the norovirus or gastroenteritis. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to prevent all infection. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.

### Water alone is not effective

Soap will remove considerably more disease-causing germs than washing hands with water alone.

### Liquid soap is best

Generally, it is better to use liquid soap than bar soap, particularly in a shared setting. However, bar soap is better than no soap.

### No advantage to using antibacterial soap

When following the handwashing steps outlined above, all soaps are equally effective at removing disease-causing germs. Antibacterial soap does not offer an advantage over regular soap.



# PRACTICAL TIPS:

## Below are some practical tips you can consider

- Make hand washing as accessible as possible. You may need to stagger hand washing for groups of pupils to help with logistics. If possible, you could think about having extra hand washing stations in classrooms. It's also important to make sure soap and paper towels are available at sinks.
- Lead by example. This helps to instil a good hand washing culture in your setting. Encourage staff to wash their hands alongside the pupils. This is also a good way to teach and monitor children when washing their hands.
- Be clear about when children need to wash their hands, so it becomes part of their routine. Children will be quick to self-regulate their handwashing routine.
- Remind children regularly. Posters also help to remind children about good hygiene practice – perhaps ask the children to design their own handwashing posters to display.
- Reward good handwashing practices. Use fun and meaningful rewards to help to instil good handwashing routines. Perhaps reward children who are helpful in reminding people when they've forgotten, or reward those children with the best, most consistent hand washing technique. Classes may also find a hand washing chart helpful too, particularly for younger pupils. Foster the idea of hand-hygiene champions in your school.



## Online resources developed by the UK Health Security Agency, in collaboration with teachers and scientists.

Interactive sessions with children are also a great way of demonstrating how germs are spread. 'E-Bug' is operated by the UK Health Security Agency and is a free educational resource for classroom and home use. E-bug makes learning about the spread, prevention and treatment of infection and micro-organisms, fun and accessible for all teachers and pupils.

All activities and lesson plans have been designed to complement the National Curriculum e.g., RSHE and Science. To find a selection of lessons which will compliment your chosen area, see below:

### E-bugs resources:

[www.e-bug.eu/](http://www.e-bug.eu/)

### KS1 resources:

The e-Bug science show and corresponding Key Stage 1 resources cover multiple topics including an introduction to microbes, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and oral hygiene. Here you will find the lesson plans, worksheets, posters and activities for each topic.

[www.e-bug.eu/ks1-teaching-resources](http://www.e-bug.eu/ks1-teaching-resources)

### KS2 resources

Key Stage 2 resources build upon the learning of microbes, hand, respiratory and oral hygiene. The concepts of useful and harmful microbes, food hygiene, animal and farm hygiene, vaccinations and antibiotics are also introduced. This page hosts the full selection of KS2 topics including links to lesson plans, student sheets, additional resources and multimedia.

[www.e-bug.eu/ks2-teaching-resources](http://www.e-bug.eu/ks2-teaching-resources)

### KS3 resources

Key Stage 3 resources years build on their learnings around useful and harmful microbes; hand, respiratory and food hygiene; vaccinations and antibiotics. They are also introduced to the topic of sexually transmitted infections. This page hosts a full selection of KS3 topics including links to lesson plans, student sheets, additional resources, and multimedia.

[www.e-bug.eu/ks3-teaching-resources](http://www.e-bug.eu/ks3-teaching-resources)

### KS4 resources

Resources which will complement KS4 level learning and further build upon the learnings around useful and harmful microbes; hand, respiratory and food hygiene; sexually transmitted infections, vaccinations and antibiotics.

[www.e-bug.eu/ks4-teaching-resources](http://www.e-bug.eu/ks4-teaching-resources)

# ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Below is an additional range of interactive activities. Any websites cited are reputable websites to support learning.





## SOAP IN ACTION:

This activity perfectly illustrates how effective soap is at banishing germs!

### Supplies:

- Bowl of water
- Soap in a small dish or liquid soap
- Jar of pepper (or other dried herbs work just as effectively).

Watch the following videos to demonstrate:

[youtu.be/k8\\_emfEJNGg](https://youtu.be/k8_emfEJNGg)

[www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/watch/germs-experiment](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/watch/germs-experiment)

Or follow the steps below:

### Instructions:

Liberally add pepper to the bowl of water. Experiment with different amounts of pepper to see if using more or less will change the outcome of the experiment.

Next, the children put a blob of liquid soap on their finger and immediately touch the water in the centre of the bowl. They should see the pepper quickly disperse from the centre of the bowl to the edges.

When soap is added to the water, it lowers the surface tension of the water. The water molecules try to stick together and move away from the soap while carrying the pepper with them. It gives a great visual representation as to why soap should be used when washing hands, with the pepper representing the germs.

## FROZEN HANDS

You can have your children wash pretend germs off frozen hands in a sensory/water table or bucket.

Removing the “germs” from another set of “hands” can make the need for handwashing more explicit for your child.

### Supplies:

- latex gloves
- water
- freezer
- washable markers
- water table or large bucket
- soap
- towel

### Steps:

- Fill a latex glove full of water. Allow a little extra room for it to expand.
- Freeze overnight.
- In the morning colour with washable markers.
- Place in water table or a large plastic bucket.
- Invite your children to follow the handwashing steps to clean the hands.

See website for illustrations:

[www.123homeschool4me.com/20-ideas-to-make-handwashing-for-kids-fun/](http://www.123homeschool4me.com/20-ideas-to-make-handwashing-for-kids-fun/)



# REAL SCIENCE: GLITTER GERMS EXPERIMENT

**Glitter. It gets everywhere.  
Just like germs! Use glitter to  
demonstrate how germs cling:**

Glitter can help to demonstrate how easily germs can spread, illustrating why it is so important to wash your hands. Watch the link or follow the steps below:

[www.childrensmuseum.org/blog/real-science-glitter-germs](http://www.childrensmuseum.org/blog/real-science-glitter-germs)

Ask all the children to rub baby oil over their hands. Then ask only a couple of the children to liberally sprinkle glitter over their hands, over the top of the baby oil. The glitter represents the germs which can easily be spread within a classroom.

Ask all children to stand in a circle and the children with the glitter on their hands to stand at opposite ends of the circle.

Ask the children with glitter to shake hands with their neighbour to their left in the circle. Those children should then shake hands with their neighbour and so on and so, until everybody has shaken hands and everybody should end up with some glitter upon their hands. Ask the children who started the glitter handshake to pass objects down the line of the circle. This will also demonstrate how easily germs – like glitter are passed on by touch and also via inanimate objects (which sometimes children inadvertently put in their mouths such as when chewing a pencil end)!

## REMOVE THAT GLITTER!

Demonstrate the different ways some people attempt to keep their hands clean.

Instruct some of the children to wash the glitter off with soap and water

Ask some of the children to wash their hands with only water

Ask the rest of the pupils to wipe the glitter off with a baby wipe

Hold a line inspection of hands to see whose hands show the most glitter/germs make it fun!

The children will quickly realise just how long it takes and how difficult it is to remove all the glitter they sprinkled onto their hands. Those who were overly enthusiastic with the glitter may now regret that choice!

This should demonstrate that whilst other methods of removal may get rid of some of the glitter (acting as germs in this case) and make our hands appear cleaner, it won't get rid of all the germs. In contrast, those who washed with soap and water should have the cleanest hands, free from glitter!

This is a great multi-sensory approach to teaching children about germs.



# MAKE SOME HOMEMADE TREAT SOAP

Another fun experiment you can apply to handwashing is making your own soap. There is plenty of inspiration online, an example is 'treat soap' which embeds a toy in the middle of the soap. The way to get to the treat? Wash those hands!

Follow the link or the steps below:

[www.kidsactivitiesblog.com/1918/treat-soap](http://www.kidsactivitiesblog.com/1918/treat-soap)

## What you need:

- glycerine
- a variety of skin safe soap dyes
- essential oil – such as lavender, peppermint
- soap mould or small plastic reusable snack container, silicone muffin cup, plastic baby food container, etc
- a small plastic toy to fit into the soap.

## Set up:

### Following the instructions on the glycerine package, melt a small amount of the glycerine:

- Add your customised food colouring and essential oils.
- Pour the soap into the silicone mould, so that it is 1/3 full.
- Wait 5-10 mins until the glycerine has begun to set.
- Place toy upside down on top of the partially set soap.
- Pour re-melted glycerine on top of the soap so the toy is covered fully and to the depth you want the soap to be.
- Wait 30 mins until the soap is set and then release from the mould to enjoy the appealing treat soap!

# RAINBOW SOAP

Helping children to make their own rainbow soap will also get children keen to wash their hands! This activity is suitable for all children, but younger children will need help and careful supervision.

## You will need:

- glycerine
- a variety of food colourings
- essential oil – such as lavender, peppermint etc
- small bowls
- loaf tin
- scales.

Start by carefully cutting the glycerine into smaller chunks for the children:

- Weigh out 250 grams of glycerine for each layer (up to seven layers).
- Next, melt the glycerine in the microwave (try 10 seconds at a time), or assist with melting over a pan- it melts quickly so keep stirring to get rid of any lumps.
- Add the food colouring and essential oil.
- Be generous with the essential oil and add 10-20 drops.
- Pour into the loaf tin.
- Wait patiently for the layer to harden (around 10-15 mins)
- Then pour the next layer in, which will be a different colour due to using different food colouring and again, wait to harden.
- Add the next different coloured layer, until you have upto 7 layers.
- Once all the layers are done, let the soap harden overnight.
- Adults can use a sharp knife (heat the knife to make cutting easier) to cut the soap into slices.

## FOR KEY STAGE 2 PUPILS

### Did you know that 1 in 10 people don't have access to clean water?

With older pupils, discussions can be held around how hygiene is not a luxury we all get access too. Not having access to safe and clean running water, which is paramount to keeping ourselves clean and healthy, is a reality for many people living in poverty globally. We are very fortunate to have access to clean, running water at all times, meaning that we are very lucky to be able to wash our hands and protect ourselves from germs.

For further information see the following link:

[www.wateraid.org/uk](http://www.wateraid.org/uk)

See the following activity, taken from Oxfam:

## MAKE A HYGIENE KIT

Families living in poverty may not have a clean water source close to home. Disasters such as earthquakes and cyclones may damage homes, hospitals and water pipes. People forced to flee home because of conflict or extreme weather may have to live in crowded camps. They might have to share one tap between up to 250 people. Living close together with others can make it easier for diseases to spread.

One way in which Oxfam works with communities is by giving out hygiene kits to help people keep clean and stay healthy.

- What would you put in a hygiene kit?
- Write or draw the five things that you think would be most important.

Discuss each other's drawings with the class and then watch the link to see what Oxfam put into the hygiene kits they distribute:

[www.oxfam.org.uk/education/home-learning-activities/keeping-clean-and-staying-healthy](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/home-learning-activities/keeping-clean-and-staying-healthy)

## POTATO EXPERIMENT

- Peel a raw potato and cut it in two.
- With unwashed hands, pass one potato section from child to child.

Then ask the children to wash their hands.

- With clean hands, pass the second potato section around from child to child.
- Keep both potatoes separate and without mixing up, place separately in clear bags. Label the bags respectively as "washed hands" and "unwashed hands".
- The unwashed hands potato will turn disgusting-looking very quickly.

**Place the bags in a dark cupboard at room temperature and leave them there for a week.**

- After a week, pull the bags out and look at the potato pieces, but don't take the potatoes out of the bags.

Discuss the different pieces with your child, asking questions such as which potato has the most growth on it? Etc. The potato which was handled with unwashed hands should appear more revolting than the potato which was handled by clean hands.



**Thank you** for your contribution to promoting healthy and hygienic hands within Worcestershire

Further quizzes, posters, and activities available at:  
<https://www.childrenshandwashing.co.uk/teaching-support>

