

Domain: Hygiene

Age group: 2-14 years

Subjects: Personal hygiene, parts of human body, health impacts

1.2 I am a 'well-washer'

Learning goals:

Knowledge:

- Children can list correctly the critical times when they should wash their hands.
- They can state the items or facilities used in handwashing.
- They know at least X (number depends on age and level of learning) risks involved in not washing hands.

Attitude:

- Children value appropriate ways and times of handwashing: "I am a well-washer".
- They appreciate the importance of everyone practicing good handwashing: "Are you?"

Practical skills:

- They can demonstrate and explain the correct way to wash hands at critical times.
- They assist younger schoolchildren and brothers and sisters in washing their hands.

Psychosocial life skills:

- They communicate effectively to others the value of handwashing at critical times.
- They make positive decisions on handwashing at critical times.
- They monitor fellow classmates and younger children/siblings on handwashing and, at non-practice, communicate with them about risks involved in not washing hands.

Participatory methods:

- Role-play
- Storytelling
- Discussion
- Demonstration
- Experiment

Materials:

Basin, water, jug, container, soap, ashes, salt, other traditional herbs (e.g. in Zambia: bubal, mutant, imbue), handwashing poster, pictures, marker, newsprint paper, manila paper.

Activities:

Role-play

- Prepare a role-play, for example:
Suzanna (or Ajeet), aged between six and eight, is at home with several younger brothers and sisters. S/he gives the brothers and sisters some food. One brother/sister does not wash his/her hands before eating. The other children do. What does Suzanna or Ajeet do? Their mother/father/grandmother comes home. What does Suzanna or Ajeet do now? (Leave this open.)
- Ask the children in class who wants to play which role or divide the roles yourself. Make sure that different children get the chance to lead and that the division of 'good' or 'bad' roles will not stimulate discrimination.

- Explain her or his role to each child separately.
- Ask the other children to observe and to think about their reactions.
- Discuss the performance. What did the younger children do? How did the older brother or sister react when one of them did not wash hands? What else could s/he have done? Typical actions and answers may be that s/he scolds or hits the younger child and/or tells the mother or grandmother or father afterwards how badly it behaved.
- Help the children think of other ways to handle the situation. For example, the older child can tell younger children how nice it is to eat food with clean hands, how much fun washing is, can set a good example, or can take the children to wash their hands.
- For older children, the scenario can include a socio-economic problem, e.g., the father or mother has died, and there is no water in the house and no money to buy soap. The rest of the procedure (observe and discuss, including alternative solutions) is the same.

Storytelling:

- Form groups of four or five children. Each group chooses their own corner of the class.
- Ask them to choose four to six pictures, e.g., cut from old magazines, and lay them out on the floor to make a story on handwashing.
- Ask each group to present their story in turn to the other children. The activity will help and enhance teamwork, analysis of a situation and public speaking.

Discussion:

- Prepare a poster on handwashing, e.g. by using cuttings from old magazines to depict critical and non-critical times for washing hands. (Those critical for health are after toilet use, before preparing food, before eating food, and after cleaning up babies' or infant faeces and cleaning their bottoms. Good habits, but not crucial in blocking transmission of diarrhoea, are washing when getting up, after eating, and after coming home from work or school.)
- Ask the children what they can identify on the poster.
- Ask them to distinguish between critical and non-critical habits and to explain why.

Demonstration:

- Find out about current practices by asking the children how they wash their hands.
- Ask some children to demonstrate how to wash hands properly.
- Ask them to use soap/wood ash/leaves/rubbing and clean running water, e.g. by pouring water from a jug to wet hands and then apply and rinse off soap, using a basin to catch the dirty water and disposing of this water in a safe way.
- Ask them to demonstrate alternatives to soap, and to show that these require firm rubbing.
- Ask the children to explain why these methods are correct, and why it is important to use the correct method of washing both hands with an agent or rubbing, and clean running water.

Experiment:

- Ask children who think that they have clean hands to come forward.
- Ask these children to wet their hands with water and then dry them on a white cloth.
- Alternatively, ask the children to line up and wash their hands in a common basin with water.
- Fill a transparent glass with this water and another glass with water that has not been used for handwashing. Or pour the used water through a clean white cloth.
- Let the children analyse the difference. What are their observations and conclusions?
- To experience the effect of soap, ask some children to wet their hands with water and dry them on a white cloth.
- Ask other children to wash hands firmly with soap and rinse the soap off thoroughly and then dry their hands on a second white cloth.

- Ask the two groups to compare their cloths to decide the difference made by washing with soap.
- Ask which alternatives can be used if soap is not available or too expensive.
- If wanted, repeat the experiment with these alternatives.

Application:

Whispering game

At break time, as children come out of the toilet, ask them to remind their friends about washing hands. Ask them to whisper in their friend's ear, "Have you washed your hands?" Whispering avoids embarrassing their friend.

Secret ballot

- Place two cardboard boxes, each with a slit, or two partly tied bags on the floor in the class.
- Mark one with YES and the other with NO.
- Screen the boxes with the help of a large cloth (such as a wrap) and a rope, or place them outside.
- Give each child a small slip of paper, newspaper or a leaf.
- Ask them to place their voting slip in the appropriate box depending on whether they have washed their hands with soap, ash or another scrubbing agent after toilet use or before eating on that day.
- Let the children count the votes and discuss the results.

Learning indicators:

- Children can correctly write down the critical times for handwashing.
- Children can demonstrate and explain proper ways of washing hands.
- Older children can give names, symptoms and consequences of three faecal-oral diseases that may spread when hands are not washed properly.

Competence:

Proper handwashing methods at critical times



Handwashing demonstration by school children in Ghana
(Photo: Eveline Bolt)



Singing 'clean hands' song before the school meal (Photo: Kathleen Shordt, IRC)