

Managing Infectious Diseases: Infection Control (Video 1)

Dr. Danette Glassy: Hello. I'm Doctor Danette Glassy. I'll be your host for this episode of "Keeping Them Safe." Today's topic is preventing infectious diseases through proper hand hygiene and cleaning techniques. It's important to know requirements for your programs vary greatly from state to state. Most states, territories, tribes, or local health departments may have different regulations, training requirements, forms, or other procedures in place. It is important to understand and follow your state or local regulations. As you may already know, infectious diseases can spread quickly in early care and education programs. There are three ways that germs spread: droplets in the air. Think of that sick child who forgets to cover a cough or sneeze. That child's germs go into the air, and other children may breathe them in; droplets on surfaces. This is similar to the first example, except the child's cough or sneeze releases droplets that contaminate surfaces or people; through direct and indirect contact: Direct contact is when a sick child touches another child. Indirect contact is when a sick child touches an object, such as a toy, and another child plays with the contaminated toy. This exposes this child to germs. Fortunately, there are ways to reduce the spread of infection. Two important ways are through good hand hygiene and effective cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting practices. The information I'm about to share comes from "Caring for Our Children," a collection of best practice standards for early care and education programs. The most common way to spread infection is through hands that are not cleaned well. Early care and education programs that consistently use good hand hygiene techniques report a drop in the spread of diseases. So, what are proper hand hygiene techniques? Wash your hands with soap for the duration of the ABC song or at least twenty seconds. Make sure the nails get cleaned as well, and then rinse with clean running water. Providers should assist or supervise young children in this practice. If it is not possible to use soap and water, for instance, if children are outside, the alternative is to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Keep in mind that hand sanitizers don't kill all the germs that are common in child care programs, such as Norovirus germs that can cause diarrhea. When using hand sanitizers, it's important that visible dirt is cleaned off the hand and to make sure the hand sanitizer is rubbed in until the hands are dry.

"Caring for Our Children" has a list of situations and times of day when providers and children need to thoroughly clean their hands. A second way of effectively reducing the spread of infectious diseases is the routine cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting of objects and surfaces in your program. Let's start with definitions. Cleaning involves using soap or detergent and water to remove dirt and germs from surfaces. It's important to clean food prep areas, as well as tables, floors, and toys. This doesn't kill all germs, but it does reduce the number of germs. Sanitizing is one step up from cleaning. It reduces germs to safe levels as defined by public health standards. Programs should sanitize surfaces and objects that are used often, such as food prep areas, utensils, and toys. Disinfecting involves using chemical products to destroy germs. Items exposed to a lot of germs, such as diaper changing tables, doorknobs, drinking fountains, and bathrooms should be disinfected after being cleaned. In Appendix K of "Caring for Our Children," you can find a recommended schedule for the routine cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting of your settings. Two cautions when cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

Always follow manufacturer's directions for use, including contact time and need for rinsing, and perform these tasks away from children. Make sure there's adequate ventilation and prevent children and staff from inhaling potentially toxic fumes. Children who have a respiratory condition are at a higher risk of problems associated with inhaling these fumes. The key to preventing infections is to have clear policies and procedures around hand hygiene and cleaning that staff understand and practice regularly. Best practices include consistently revisiting these policies and procedures with staff through observation and training. You may want to post clear hand hygiene and cleaning guidelines in your settings, specifically around areas that may have more germs, like hand washing sinks, food prep areas, and your diaper changing tables. At the end of this episode, be sure to check out the online training, as well as resources for staff and families on the video page. Before we close, I have two reflective questions for you. First, what are some plans and policies you have in place for reducing the spread of germs in your program? And second, how do you ensure that staff are aware of and practicing ways to reduce the spread of germs routinely and consistently in your program? Thank you for spending this time with me. We'll see you on another episode of "Keeping Them Safe." Remember, the more you learn, the safer they are.