

Handwashing at School



Every day contact between students, staff and school volunteers spreads germs that can cause sickness. Sharing items (eg, books, puzzles, pencils, computers, water bottles, lip gloss, skipping ropes) or touching door handles and light switches are ways that germs can spread throughout a school.

Some students do not adequately wash their hands on a regular basis due to lack of time, limited access to handwashing facilities and lack of encouragement or education. Handwashing, when done correctly, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.

Apply the School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) to handwashing

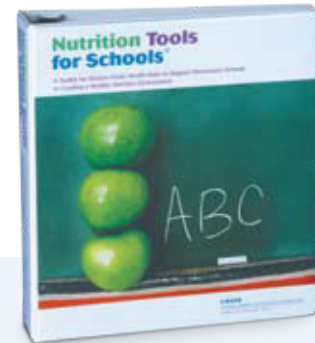
The Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) mandates that all food and beverages sold in schools be prepared, served and stored safely. The Policy also states that schools should establish a healthy eating environment. Making handwashing a part of daily routines will help schools achieve this.

What is appropriate student handwashing?

Schools can help decrease the spread of sickness by:

- Offering regular handwashing instruction
- Allowing time for handwashing, especially before eating
- Keeping handwashing facilities in good repair and stocked with supplies (eg, soap, paper towels)
- Reminding students and staff to wash their hands:
 - Before eating, preparing food or visiting someone who is sick
 - After using the bathroom, blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, handling garbage, touching animals or playing outdoors
 - When they look or feel dirty

Nutrition Tools for Schools



Nutrition Tools for Schools® is a program consisting of a Toolkit and public health support to help your school create a healthy nutrition environment.

Did you know...?

Sneezing into the bend of your arm rather than into your hands avoids further contamination.



Success to share

The principal at John McCrae Public School in Markham is determined to ensure his school is promoting handwashing to all students! To kick off their school campaign, he dressed up as 'bubbles of soap' for Halloween. Submitted by Lucy Valleau, Public Health Nutritionist, York Region Community and Health Services

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers in schools:

- Use when soap and water is not available
- Use when hands are visibly clean – hand sanitizers are not that effective if used on hands that are visibly dirty
- Should contain between 60-90% alcohol
- Should be stored safely away from children

To correctly use alcohol-based hand sanitizers:

Apply a thumbnail size of hand sanitizer to the palm of your hand. Rub hands together, covering all surfaces, including the backs of your hands and under the tips of your fingers. Rub until your hands are completely dry.

Reminder:

Adult supervision is required when children are using hand sanitizer

Tips to encourage student handwashing

1. Contact your local public health unit/ department for handwashing education and resources. Some will provide handwashing demonstrations in schools.
2. Demonstrate proper handwashing technique with students and reinforce the message with posters showing the proper technique at all hand sinks (eg, classrooms, washrooms, kitchen facilities, lunchroom, teachers' lounge). Provide ongoing supervision and reminders to children.
3. Ensure that your school has adequate facilities that are dedicated to handwashing, within reach of younger students, have warm running water, liquid soap in a pump and paper towels in a dispenser.
4. Set a good example for students by ensuring that teachers, educational assistants, classroom volunteers, lunch monitors, student nutrition program volunteers, canteen operators and lunch volunteers practise proper handwashing technique.

Together we can make the healthy choice the easy choice!

For more information about Nutrition Tools for Schools®, P/PM 150, or healthy eating, please contact your local public health unit:

York Region Community and Health Services
Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653

or visit

www.york.ca/nutrition

For information on healthy schools go to the Ministry of Education Healthy Schools website: www.ontario.ca/healthyschools.