

LEARN ABOUT

HANDWASHING FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN



This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider

Why Handwashing Matters

Handwashing helps keep kids healthy by removing dirt, germs, and viruses. It's extra important before eating, after using the bathroom, or after playing outside.

Breaking Down Hand Washing

- 1. Approach the sink:**
Encourage the child to walk up to the sink independently.
- 2. Turn on the faucet:**
Teach them how to turn on the tap, adjusting water temperature if necessary.
- 3. Wet hands:**
Guide them to hold hands under the water.
- 4. Apply soap:**
Show how to pump soap onto one hand.
- 5. Scrub hands:**
Demonstrate rubbing hands together, including the back of the hands, between fingers, and under nails.
- 6. Rinse hands:**
Instruct on rinsing off the soap thoroughly.
- 7. Rinse hands:**
This could be with a towel if sensory issues are present.
- 8. Dry hands:**
Finally, show how to dry hands with a towel or air dryer.

Sensory Considerations

Many children with autism have sensory sensitivities. The feeling of water, the texture of soap, or the sound of running water can trigger sensory sensitivities, leading to anxiety and resistance.

Tips for Teaching Autistic Children

Use Visual Steps

Show pictures or videos of each handwashing step

Create a Routine

Practice at the same time each day to build comfort

Use a Timer or a Song

Try singing a 20-second song to show how long to scrub

Offer Choices

Let them choose their soap scent or towel color

Be Patient

Give them time, gentle encouragement and praise small successes