

Helping your Child with Hygiene

A task all parents must take on is to teach their children habits to be clean and hygienic. A daily hygiene routine is necessary for good health as well as to meet social norms around cleanliness and appearance. Children will not pick up basic hygiene on their own; they need adult assistance to develop good habits around cleanliness. Some children are very resistant to parent insistence on cleanliness and hygiene.

It can be difficult for a parent to ensure that necessary hygiene takes place. Think about what parts of the grooming are necessary and which are only your preference. Dental care is a necessity for good health, and a parent must find ways to ensure that a proper dental routine is followed. Similarly, some children dislike having their hair washed, but this must be done. It is not necessary that hair be washed daily, however. Use tear free shampoos, let the child do as much as he or she can independently. Try a squeeze bottle or hand held shower attachment for rinsing.

It is easiest for preschoolers to follow a daily routine that happens in the same order and around the same times in each day. Think about your family's daily schedule when planning your routines. For many families, mornings are a bit of a rush, and bath time and hair washing fits in better in the evening.

When planning a hygiene routine, think about

- how much time it will take-you need to include bath time, hair care, hand washing, face washing, fingernail and toenail trimming, and dental care. Providing clean clothes for the children is very time-consuming-kids are naturally quite hard on their clothes at a young age.
- what your child's daily hygiene needs are
- how much help your child needs and how independent they are

By the age of 4 or 5, most children can brush or comb their hair, wash their face and hands, and dress themselves, although they may need help with such things as tying and buttons.

By the age of three, many children want to brush their own teeth, but they still need your help to ensure the teeth are brushed properly.

Teach your child some basic protection from germs

- To cover their mouth and nose when sneezing and/or coughing
- To wash their hands frequently during the day. You can model both of these behaviours for your child

Hands should be washed

- Before and after meals
- After using the bathroom
- After sneezing or wiping or blowing nose
- After playing with pets or farm animals
- After playing outside or in a sandbox
- After playing with shared toys, such as in a public waiting room