

Hand Washing Tips For Good Clean Fun

(NAPSA)—Making mud pies. Climbing trees. Sliding into third base and kicking up a cloud of dust. Any kid will tell you that getting dirty is one of the best parts about playing outdoors. And while most parents agree that grimy games are all in good fun, they shudder at the thought of all the germs their kids are picking up outside.

“My sons make a beeline for the kitchen as soon as they step through the front door. Soap is the last thing on their minds,” says a Boston mother of Matthew, age 6 and Eric, age 10. “I spend half my life in the bathroom making sure they wash up before mealtime. I hate to nag, but kids are germ magnets and it’s my job to convince them to wash their hands several times a day.”

What’s a parent to do? Relax and make clean-up fun, according to one prominent health advocate. “Teaching kids to wash their hands correctly is a healthy habit that can last a lifetime,” says Dr. Barbara Hatcher, American Public Health Association (APHA) director of scientific and professional affairs and spokesperson for the Softsoap® Lather Up for Good Health® campaign, a children’s educational program sponsored by Colgate-Palmolive. “The trick is to make the experience positive and memorable for the entire family. Proper hand washing helps destroy many of the germs and bacteria we come into contact with every day.”



APHA recommends hand washing **before** eating, preparing or serving food, caring for someone sick, treating a cut and **after** playing outside, arriving home, using the bathroom, sneezing, coughing, nose blowing or playing with pets.

THE 20-SECOND RULE

A quick rinse is not enough. According to APHA, hands should be washed with soap and warm water for a minimum of 20 seconds to remove germs. Here is their recommended procedure for squeaky-clean kids.

1. Wet hands with warm water and apply soap
2. Rub hands to make lather
3. Scrub between fingers and scrape nails across palms
4. Rinse hands
5. Dry with a clean towel

Additional Tips for Hand Washing Fun

• **Give Kids a Boost!**—Kids come in all shapes and sizes. Make sure the little ones are “up to the task” at hand (and the sink), by keeping a stool nearby for easy access.

• **Bubble Buddies**—Reinforce returning to the sink by accenting the area with kid-friendly soap. Fun shaped bars are good, pump soaps even better. One new product, Softsoap® Rainforest Series Antibacterial Liquid Hand Soap, features a whimsical 3-D parrot, panda or monkey in their natural habitat—a tropical rainforest. To see the one that’s right for you, visit www.softsoap.com.

• **Lather Up!**—Challenge your kids to see just how much lather or how many bubbles they can make while washing. Keep a record and offer rewards like gold stars or stickers for an extra sudsy performance.

• **Towel Time**—Dry off with tantalizing towels in vibrant colors or perky prints. For that special touch consider a personalized hand towel embroidered with your child’s name.

Once kids know how and when to wash their hands, make it a ritual they won’t forget by posting signs to help them remember. Most importantly, parents need to lead by example by washing regularly and modeling this important behavior.