



Children and Handwashing

Germs can spread quickly when school-aged children share surfaces in classrooms and are in close proximity to each other. "Because students share supplies and don't always practice proper hand hygiene, classrooms provide many opportunities for germs to spread quickly," explains Annie Wendt, Manager of Infection Prevention at Bronson Healthcare. "Teaching children the importance of washing their hands can greatly reduce their risk for illness."

Germs enter the body through the eyes, nose and/or mouth. Some germs can cause illnesses like diarrhea, colds, ear infections and other more serious diseases. Children can become infected with germs by:

- Getting coughed or sneezed on
- Putting things in their mouth
- Touching surfaces and then rubbing their eyes, nose and/or mouth
- Sharing food, drinks, utensils or cups with others

One of the best ways to keep everyone healthy is to make sure they are properly washing their hands. According to the CDC, one in three diarrhea-related sicknesses, and one in five respiratory infections (such as a cold or the flu) can be prevented by washing hands.¹

"The practice of proper handwashing is one of the most important ways to keep children and adults healthy and prevent the spread of germs," says Wendt. Here are some steps for properly hand washing:

- Wet your hands with water and apply soap
- Lather the soap between your hands and fingers
- Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds (tip: hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice)
- Rinse your hands well
- Dry your hands completely

Remind all children to wash their hands:

- Before meals
- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing
- After playing outside
- After using the bathroom
- After playing with or touching animals or family pets

This article is brought to you by Bronson Children's Hospital, southwest Michigan's only children's hospital. For more information about children's health, visit [bronsonhealth.com/services/children](https://www.bronsonhealth.com/services/children).

¹Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/handwashing-poster.pdf>