

**Norland  
Know-Hows**

**Good hygiene  
practices**

## How to teach good hygiene practices to young children

Coronavirus is not going away any time soon, so how do we teach our little ones to stay safe with good hygiene practices?

### Good hygiene practices include:

- washing hands after using the bathroom
- washing hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing one's nose
- washing hands before eating meals or snacks
- washing hands after playing outdoors
- washing hands after touching animals or pets
- washing hands after using public transport.

Encourage children to leave their bags and coats at the entrance to the home (to prevent any bacteria from outside being transmitted through the house).

Make sure they eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables (for a healthy immune system).

Get them to change their clothes when they come home from school (to minimise transmission of bacteria and viruses).

Encourage children to cough or sneeze in their elbow rather than with their hand – practise it with them.

Here are some tips:

### Make it fun!

By not making it a punishment or chore, children will be more likely to engage.

For example, sing songs, use props, get their toys involved. There is plenty online to inspire you!

### Include good hygiene practices as part of your child's daily routine so that they become a habit

Be consistent even when out and about so that your child gets a clear message.

We have a separate blog on routines if you are struggling.

### Lead by example

Make sure that your child sees you doing it properly. To begin with, you could do it quite conspicuously so that it is obvious. Remember, children will imitate what you do, good or bad!

### Use available resources

There are some great resources out there, mostly free on YouTube and websites. You could download a poster and put it in the bathroom. Books can be a useful way of introducing and exploring a topic. If they have a favourite character or hero, include them in some way.

### Handwashing

Sing a song while you wash hands so that you are sure they are doing it for the recommended period of time. Change the songs regularly so that they don't get bored. Again, there are lots of examples online! You could always adapt their favourite song to fit the timing.

Allow them to be as independent as possible while washing hands. Look at the bathroom from the child's eyes – can they easily reach everything they need?

Allow children to choose their own soap and towel – that way, they might be more likely to use them.

If using antibacterial gel with young children, supervise its use. Encourage children not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth, as it can be irritating to those areas.

**Regularly check that the way in which they are washing their hands is correct**

Try not to nag – be light-hearted and make sure that they see you doing it correctly.

**Make sure children understand why good hygiene measures are important**

Be factually appropriate to their age. Don't frighten them, but be honest. Isabel Mohan from Tiney suggests putting glitter on a child's hands as a tool for demonstrating to a child how germs can spread.

Do not dismiss their worries, however implausible; listen carefully; and answer their questions. If you don't know the answer, you could look it up together.

This information is intended to provide guidance only. It is not exhaustive and should not be seen as a substitute for updating or enhancing your knowledge by completing training or a CPD course on the subject.