



Supporting children to learn handwashing skills and routines

With children returning to on-site schooling, new routines such as increased handwashing will be introduced. Some children may need additional support to master this new skill or to adjust to the new routine.

Some strategies that may help include:

1. **Display visual prompts or a schedule.** This may include a schedule showing when handwashing will occur, and images in bathroom areas demonstrating the steps for handwashing.
2. **Repetition.** Some children may need lots of brief prompts, repetition and short step-by-step instructions when first learning this skill. These supports can be gradually reduced as children become more proficient.
3. **Practise at home.** Ask families to practise with their child at home, using hand-on-hand guidance if needed.
4. **Embed handwashing into daily routines.** Children learn skills more quickly, and experience less frustration or distress, when it is part of a regular routine.
5. **Learning is best when children feel calm.** If a child becomes distressed or agitated when learning this skill, take a break, and try again when they're feeling calm.
6. **Show them how to wash their hands.** Show children how you wash your hands, and show them videos of people washing their hands. Videos/modelling that show each step are best.
7. **Use music.** Songs about handwashing can help children remember the steps. Access songs online, or write your own.
8. **Ensure everything is within reach.** Make sure all materials they need are easily accessible.
9. **Seek support if needed.** Seek support from families and the child's health professionals if they need further support to acquire this skill.