Babies and children under 5 years old are at a higher risk for getting sick from **foodborne illnesses** (food poisoning). They have a harder time fighting off infections compared to older children and adults. Take extra care when handling babies’ food, bottles, and utensils to make sure they are safe and clean.

**Hand Washing**

Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is one of the best ways to keep germs and disease from spreading. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

State and local requirements regarding safe food preparation in **child care sites** may vary. Contact your local health department to get a copy of your local food safety requirements for child care sites.

See the “**Hand Washing**” handout on page 111. It can be a helpful reminder if you post this page next to the sink and refrigerator at your child care site.
When Should Your Hands Be Washed?

Wash your hands thoroughly before you:

- Feed a baby
- Handle, prepare, serve, or touch food or bottles
- Handle spoons, forks, bowls, and plates
- Prepare bottles
- Put away clean dishes
- Give medication to a child
- Treat a cut or wound
- Care for a sick baby or child
Wash your hands thoroughly after you:

- arrive at the site for the day
- handle raw meat, chicken, turkey, pork, fish, or eggs
- change a baby’s or child’s diaper or clothing
- use the bathroom or assist a child in the bathroom
- handle a baby or child who is ill or give medication
- come in contact with runny noses, drool, vomit, urine, poop, or blood
- blow your nose, sneeze, or cough into tissues or hands
- get your hands dirty, or have been cleaning or working outside
- wipe noses, mouths, bottoms, sores, or cuts
- touch pets or other animals
- take out the garbage
- shake hands with a parent or child
Make sure to wash a baby or child’s hands before and after meals and snacks. Also, wash babies' hands after changing their diaper. Many babies place their hands in their diaper area during changing.

**Did you know?**

Children watch and learn from you! When you wash your hands often you are keeping children safe and teaching them healthy habits.

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**Prevent Spreading Illness to Others**

**If You or Another Staff Member Has an Illness**

People who are sick and handle food can spread their illness to others, including babies and children. Check with your State agency or local health department for guidelines on handling food if you or your employees are sick.

**Cleaning Food Preparation and Eating Areas**

Clean all food preparation areas before and after each meal. Items should be washed with soap and hot water and then rinsed with hot water. This includes:

- all surfaces used to prepare food, including cutting boards, countertops, and tables.
- cooking equipment and utensils.
- food service and dining areas, including high chairs.

**Cleaning Dishes and Utensils**

Dishes, feeding utensils, and high chair trays should be free of chips, cracks, or sharp edges. They should also be washed after each use.

Washable items such as bibs or placemats should be washed after each meal.

**Protective Clothing**

Wear clean clothing when working with breastmilk, infant formula, or food. Check with your State agency or local health department about specific requirements regarding the use of gloves or other types of protective equipment during food preparation.
Refrigerator and Freezer Temperature

Make sure the refrigerator at your child care site is set at a temperature of 40 °F (4 °C). The temperature in a freezer should be 0 °F (-18 °C) or colder. Check the refrigerator and freezer regularly with an appliance thermometer. If the temperatures are above these levels, have the appliances checked immediately by a qualified repair person.

Reducing Lead Exposure From Food or Water

Water can contain substances that are harmful to babies, such as lead. It is important to make sure the water in your child care site is approved by the local health department and safe to use. Exposure to lead can affect children’s attention span and IQ, and can negatively impact their ability to do well in school. The effects of lead exposure are permanent.

To reduce the chances that a baby will be exposed to lead from food or water:

- ask your local health department how often your water should be checked for lead.
- do not feed babies any foods or beverages that were canned in another country (outside of the United States). These cans may contain lead which can leak into the food.
- avoid using imported dishware, as it may contain high levels of lead.
- do not cook, store, or serve foods or beverages in containers that may contain toxic levels of lead, such as:
  - decorative ceramic ware or pottery that has been imported.
  - antique ceramic or pewter containers, dishes, or utensils.
- wash each baby and child's hands with soap and water before feeding. This will wash away dirt and dust that could contain lead. Dust and dirt containing lead can come from outside or inside a building. For this same reason, it is important to regularly wash toys.

In This Chapter

In this chapter, you have learned about how to safely prepare foods and surfaces before and after meal and snack time. In the next chapter, you will learn how to prepare foods to prevent a baby from choking.
For Child Care Providers: Hand Washing

Hand washing is one of the best ways to stop the spread of germs that cause illness. Make sure to wash your hands thoroughly by following these steps:

1. Wet your hands with running water. Add soap.
2. Wash all surfaces on hands. Wash carefully between your fingers, around the tops and palms, over wrists, and under fingernails.
3. Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands with a clean, disposable paper towel.
6. Turn off the faucet using the disposable paper towel instead of your clean, bare hands.

A handout from Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
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Key Concepts

Hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of foodborne illness.

Wash all surfaces used to prepare food, including cutting boards, countertops, and tables; food preparation equipment and utensils; and food service and eating areas, including high chairs, with hot water and soap before serving food.

Set the refrigerator at your child care site at a temperature of 40 °F (4 °C). Set the temperature in a freezer at 0 °F (-18 °C) or colder.

To reduce exposure to lead, only use water that is approved by your local health department.
Check Your Knowledge

1. Fill in the blanks to complete this description of proper hand washing:

Wet your hands with running water. Add ______. Wash all surfaces on hands. Rub your hands together for at least ______ seconds. Wash carefully between ________, around the tops and palms of hands, over wrists, and under ________. Rinse your hands well under running water and dry them with a clean, disposable paper towel. Turn off the faucet, using ____________, instead of __________.

2. To reduce a baby’s exposure to lead, you can:

A. Make sure the water is considered safe by the local health department.

B. Store foods in covered plastic or glass food storage containers.

C. Cook foods in ceramic ware or pottery made outside of the United States.

D. A and B

3. True or False? Properly storing food is important for food safety. The recommended temperature settings are 40 °F (4 °C) for the refrigerator and 0 °F (-18 °C) or colder for the freezer.

Answers: 1. soap, 2. 20, 3. True