

HANDWASHING & HEALTHY HABITS

Grades: K-3

Materials: Flour (to represent germs); plastic or wooden toys (e.g., Legos, blocks, etc.); soap; paper towels; and a sink with water.

Access to clean, safe water is a major challenge in many countries. Many children around the world don't have safe water to wash their hands. Sometimes this is due to natural disasters like hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, or monsoons. Other times it is because of the climate and landscape where. They may live where there is a drought or where there is lack of fresh water sources.



Discuss: Who can tell me what germs are? Can you see them? What do germs do when they get in our bodies?

Explain that germs are everywhere, even though we cannot see them because they are so tiny. Germs can make us sick.

In this activity, we will imagine that this flour is actually germs.

Directions:

1. Spread flour on a plate.
2. Ask the children to place their hands on top of the layer of flour. Remind them to imagine that the flour is germs.
3. Provide easy-to-wash plastic or wooden toys and ask them to play for a few minutes.
4. After the few minutes are over, ask them to stop and examine their hands. Ask how much of the flour has transferred from their hands to the toys.

Explain:

Remind them again that you're pretending the flour on their hands represents germs. These germs can come from our noses and mouths when we cough or sneeze, or when we touch something with germs on it. What would happen if someone touched your hands with the germs (flour)? I would get on them, too.

What would happen if someone touched the toy you played with that now has germs (flour)? The germs may get on them, too. This is how germs get on door knobs, light switches, tables, and each other.

So, how do we get rid of the germs on our hands? Hand sanitizer is a good option when you can't wash your hands. But washing your hands with soap and warm water are the best way to remove the germs.

When should we wash our hands? Look for answers like after coughing, sneezing, or blowing our noses; after using the restroom; before eating food, etc.

What is the correct way to wash our hands? Use warm running water, rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds with soap (sing the happy birthday song twice to know how long to rub your hands together), clean underneath your fingernails, rinse in running water, and dry. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet, then place the paper towel in the trash can.

What would happen if we lived somewhere without safe water for washing your hands? Use this exercise to help children understand that people who live in places without access to safe water for handwashing are more likely to get sick from germs.