



## Child Care *Hot Topics*

### Hot Topic 4: Soap & Water vs Hand Sanitizer

Hello Child Care Providers,

There are important differences between washing hands with soap and water and using hand sanitizer. Soap and water work to remove all types of germs from hands, while sanitizer acts by killing certain germs on the skin. Although alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs in many situations, they should be used in the right situations. Soap and water are more effective than hand sanitizers at removing certain kinds of germs.

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/hand-sanitizer-use.html>

We are grateful for you and are here to support you. Please reach out to your licensor with any questions, and keep up to date on all things child care in Minnesota by visiting: <https://mn.gov/childcare/>.

-- Child Care Licensing Team

#### Soap and water is the best first option for hand washing:

- Washing with soap and water is best option
- Antibacterial soap or plain soap works the same. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state there is no added health benefit for consumers using soaps containing antibacterial ingredients compared with using plain soap. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html>
  - Wet hands, add soap, scrub palms, tops of hands, between fingers and under nails for at least 20 seconds and then rinse with clean water. Dry with a paper towel or let air dry.
  - Remember that if you are low on paper towels, the kids could use a towel all day as long as each child has their own towel and it is washed each day. Or if the kids can't keep track of their own towel, then you could put a stack of washcloths by the sinks and after the child dries their hands with a washcloth, they put it in a basket for you to wash later. Each washcloth is only used once and then put in the basket. That way kids don't need to keep track of which towel is their towel.
  - Providers always have to use a single use towel so you must either use paper towels or a clean towel/washcloth each time need to dry your hands.

#### Hand Sanitizer when soap and water is not an option:

- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Many studies have found that sanitizers with an alcohol concentration between 60–95% are more effective at killing germs than those with a lower alcohol concentration or non-alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains **at least 60% alcohol**. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities. When using hand sanitizer, apply the product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount) and rub the product all over the surfaces of your hands, for at least 20 seconds, until your hands are dry. **Do NOT** rinse or wipe off the hand sanitizer before it's dry; it may not work well against germs.

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>