# A clean and healthy start to school

For parents with children starting school

www.dettol.co.uk

www.unitetheunion.org/cphva

# Protect your child from infection

## Healthy hygiene

With over 80 years' expertise in hygiene and a shared interest in protecting infants and young children from infections, Dettol, together with the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), has developed this leaflet to explain how following good hygiene at school can help your child reduce their risk of picking up an infection.

## Germs and hygiene

Bacteria, viruses and fungi are found all around us. Some of them, which we call germs, are harmful and can make us ill by causing infections like colds, flu and tummy upsets. Others are actually useful to us, like the bacteria in our gut that help us digest our food.

You can't stop your child coming into contact with germs, but what you can do is teach them that, through the use of some simple hygiene measures, they can reduce their risk of picking up an infection. Good hygiene is especially important when your child starts school, as they will encounter a variety of germs which can easily spread from one child to another.

## Hand hygiene – helping to control the spread of germs

Germs can be picked up in several ways at home and in school:

- **Breathing** – when an infected person talks, sneezes or coughs, they expel germs into the air, which can land on surfaces or be breathed in by others.
- **Touch** – germs on contaminated surfaces such as toilet flushes, taps, door handles, toys, kitchen surfaces, desks and floors can be picked up and transferred into our body when we touch our eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.
- **Eating** – stomach bugs usually arise by eating food that is contaminated with germs, usually because it hasn't been cooked or stored properly, has been touched with unwashed hands, or has been placed on a contaminated surface such as a kitchen work top or chopping board.

Children can help stop germs spreading and protect themselves from infections by washing their hands with soap and water:

- before touching food or eating
- after going to the toilet
- after playing with a pet or animal
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose
- after touching something dirty (e.g. a used tissue)
- after playing outside
- whenever they look dirty.

*Teach your child to use a tissue and to wash their hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose.*

## Preparing your child for school

Learning to look after themselves is an important part of your child's development. Here's how you can help them with good hygiene practices.

### Places to wash their hands

If you can, visit the school with your child to see the washing facilities available. Remind them that even though they aren't at home, they should still wash their hands regularly, especially after they have been to the toilet and before they eat.

### Talk about toilets

Ideally, your child should be able to use the toilet independently before they start school. Help your child to have the confidence to ask to go to the toilet, and to ask for help if they need it. Make sure they wear clothing that is easy to do up again once they have been to the toilet.

### Keep coughs and sneezes to yourself

Germs can spread through the air when we cough or sneeze, so to help stop spreading germs to others, encourage your child to cough and sneeze into a tissue or into the crook of their arm, rather than into the air or onto their hands. Germs can also spread from used tissues, so teach your child to put them in the bin and wash their hands afterwards.

## Health and the school environment

### A healthy diet

Your child should have a well-balanced diet while at school. If your child has a school meal, talk to them about healthy things to eat, and when they get home, ask what they had for lunch, to help monitor what they have eaten. If you are providing a packed lunch, ensure the meal is nutritionally balanced and that you follow good hygiene practices when preparing it. Pack your child's food in an airtight box and check that when at school, it is stored correctly before it is eaten.

### Pre-school vaccinations

Before your child starts school, make sure they have had the appropriate vaccinations. Contact your health visitor, practice nurse or GP for advice. You can also refer to the vaccination pages of the NHS website (www.nhs.uk).

### First aid

If your child gets a cut or graze at school, encourage them to tell a teacher so the wound can be cleaned and treated with an antiseptic liquid or cream, and covered with a plaster if necessary.

### Medical conditions and medication

If your child has a medical condition and/or needs to take medication while at school, you should discuss this with your child's teacher or the head teacher so you know how they will help your child.

### The school nurse

You can speak to the school nurse about any of your child's health needs at school. School nurses are there to give confidential advice, care and treatment, and to look after and protect your child's physical and emotional health.

## Exclusion periods for infectious conditions

When a child has an infectious illness, you should keep them away from school to prevent passing on the infection to others. The table below shows the standard exclusion periods for some common infections in the UK.

| Disease | Exclusion period |
|---|---|
| Chickenpox | Until all the spots have crusted over |
| Colds | None |
| Conjunctivitis | None |
| Diarrhoea and vomiting | Until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting (exclusion from swimming for 2 weeks may be necessary) |
| Flu | Until recovered |
| Head lice | None |
| Impetigo | Until lesions are crusted over and healed or 48 hours after starting antibiotic treatment |
| Measles | For 4 days after the rash appears |
| Meningitis (bacterial) | Until recovered |
| Meningitis (viral) | None |
| Threadworms | None |

Dettol aims to help protect children and their families from infection by the use of good hygiene practice.

For healthy tips and more, visit our website at **www.dettol.co.uk**.

Dettol CPHVA Unite in Health

**www.unitetheunion.org/cphva**

Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

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