

Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are
Soap and water, wash and scrub
Get those germs off, rub-a-dub
Twinkle, twinkle little star
See how clean my two hands are.

It's no secret that washing hands is one of the best ways to reduce the spread of infections, including the common cold and flu. Children's and teachers' hands should be washed upon arrival, after toileting/diapering, after engaging in messy play activities, after coming into contact with bodily fluids (all those runny noses!) and before meals- sometimes after meals too if finger foods were served. There are five steps to hand washing:

1. Wet your hands.
2. Apply soap.
3. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse for at least 10 seconds.
5. Dry hands, preferably with a disposable towel.

However, there is also one more thing to consider: the soap! There are many brands of liquid soap available and the label for many of these products states "Keep out of reach of children." Until recently, soaps bearing this label were not recommended in child care centers as they can be a health and safety hazard. Recently, after conferring with representatives from ECCLS and the AMA, the decision was made by ERS to accept liquid soaps with the ""Keep out of reach" label. However, since these soaps CAN cause illness when ingested (and who wants to clean up spit up?), children should be closely supervised when washing hands and large refill containers of soap should be stored in areas that children do not use.

Whew- that's a lot to teach children- but the payoff is healthier children and staff.