

DIAPERING

General information

Childcare providers and school health staff can help prevent the spread of infectious organisms by changing diapers in a separate designated area and by using effective cleaning and disinfecting practices. Germs found in the stool can be spread when the hands of caregivers or children contaminate objects, surfaces, or food. Infections that can be spread by contact with stool include bacteria (e.g., *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *Campylobacter*), parasites (e.g., *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, pinworms), and viruses (e.g., rotavirus, norovirus, hepatitis A virus).

The importance of using good body mechanics cannot be over emphasized when changing diapers of larger or older children, as well as infants and toddlers. Use appropriate bending and lifting techniques to prevent injury. For more information on diapering procedures, see “*Diapering Procedure*” in Section 2. For more information on changing pull-ups/toilet learning procedures, see “*Changing Pull-ups/Toilet Learning Procedure*” in Section 2.

Basic principles

- Change diapers in a designated diapering area.
- Follow safety procedures and do not leave children unattended.
- Use surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Use a separate area for diapering that is away from medication, food storage, food preparation, and eating areas.
- Dispose of soiled diapers in a “hands-free” covered waste container.
- Wash hands of both staff and children after diapering.
- Do not allow objects such as toys, blankets, pacifiers, or food in the diapering areas.
- Consult with your childcare health consultant or school nurse for any special diapering issues.

Equipment

- **Changing surface**
 - The changing surface should be separate from other activities.
 - The surface should be smooth, moisture-resistant, and of an easily cleanable material.
 - For extra protection use a non-absorbent, disposable paper under the child.
 - The changing surface should be next to a handwashing sink.
- **Handwashing sink and supplies**
 - Adequate handwashing facilities should be available to staff when diapering children.
 - The handwashing sink should be equipped with both hot and cold running water mixed through one faucet (hot water temperature not greater than 120⁰ F).
 - The water controls should ideally be foot-operated or knee-operated to avoid contamination of hands and/or water controls.
 - If faucets are not foot-operated or knee-operated, turn off faucet handles with a disposable paper towel.
 - The changing sink should not be the same as the food preparation sink.
 - Liquid soap, paper towels, and fingernail brush should be within reach.
 - Single-service, disposable towels should be used instead of cloth towels.

Handwashing procedures

The hands of the provider and child must be washed after each diaper change. Refer to handwashing information in Section 3. Check with your childcare health consultant or school nurse to determine which handwashing procedures are appropriate for different age groups of children.

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Diapers

- High-absorbency disposable diapers are preferred because cloth diapers do not contain stool and urine as well and require more handling (the more handling, the greater chances for spread of germs).
- All diapers must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of stool and urine.
- Soiled clothing should be sealed in a plastic bag and sent home each day.
 - Rinsing soiled items increases risk of contamination and transmission of communicable diseases. Inform parents who protest this policy that it protects all of the children present, as well as the childcare providers.
- If cloth diapers are used, talk with your childcare health consultant about concerns and procedures.

Cloth diaper considerations

- The outer covering and inner lining must both be changed with each diaper change.
- Outer coverings must not be reused until they are laundered.
- Each child should have an individually labeled, covered, and plastic-lined diaper pail or waterproof, sealed diaper wet bag intended for storing soiled cloth diapers.
- Soiled diapers or clothing should not be rinsed in sinks or toilets. Like clothing, soiled cloth diapers should be sent home to avoid exposing others.
- The diaper or clothing soiled with stool must be put in separate plastic bags before placing into the diaper pail or waterproof, sealed diaper wet bag.
- Soiled cloth diapers and/or clothing should be sent home each day.
- An adequate supply of diapers and diaper coverings must be available for each day.

Disposable gloves

- Non-latex gloves, without powder, should be considered because of possible allergy to latex in staff and children.
- Gloves should be worn when changing the diaper of a child with diarrhea or a known infection that is spread through the stool.
- Pregnant women or women considering pregnancy should wear gloves when changing any diaper.
- Staff should wear gloves if they have open cuts, sores, or cracked skin, or if the children have open areas on their skin.
- Gloves should be discarded and hands washed after each diaper change.
- Gloves must be single use only. **Food service gloves are not appropriate.**

Disposable wipes

- A sufficient number of pre-moistened wipes should be dispensed before starting the diapering procedure to prevent contamination of the wipes and/or the container.
- Each child should have an individually labeled container of wipes that is not shared with others. Put the child's full first and last name on the container.



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Skin care items

- Childcare providers and schools must have policies regarding use of these products. Parents/guardians or healthcare providers must provide written, signed directions for their use.
- If skin care items are used, keep them within the staff's reach and out of the reach of children.
- Each child must have an individually labeled container of skin care products that is not shared with others. Label the container with the child's full first and last name.
- Skin care products must be used according to package directions.

Plastic bags

- Disposable plastic bags must be used to line waste containers and to send soiled clothing or cloth diapers home.
- Plastic bags must be stored out of children's reach.

Waste containers and diaper pails

- A tightly covered container, preferably "hands-free" with a foot-operated lid, is recommended.
- The container must be kept away from children.
- The container must be lined with a disposable plastic trash bag.
- The waste container should be emptied before full and at least daily.
- The container should be cleaned with detergent and water, rinsed, and disinfected daily.

Potty chair or commodes (not recommended)

- Flush toilets are recommended rather than commodes or potty chairs. However, if potty chairs or commodes are used, frames should be smooth and easy to clean.
- Empty the potty chair or commode into the toilet, clean with soap and water, rinse, and disinfect after each use. Empty dirty cleaning water into the toilet and not the hand sink.
- If a potty chair or commode has wheels, lock wheels into position while using.
- Utilize proper body mechanics when moving and positioning a child on a potty chair or commode.

Cleaning and disinfecting the diapering/toileting area

- Use disposable gloves and towels, cleaning solution, and disinfecting solution (***Bleach solution 1 or another appropriate disinfecting product***, see "*How to Mix Bleach Solutions*" for more information).
 1. Clean first with soap or detergent and water.
 2. Rinse.
 3. Spray the area thoroughly with ***Bleach solution 1 or another appropriate disinfecting product***.
 4. Wipe the area to distribute the disinfectant evenly using single-service, disposable paper towels.
 5. Discard paper towels in a plastic-lined container.
 6. Allow surface to air dry.
 7. Wash your hands.

If you have questions about cleaning and disinfecting procedures, ask your childcare health consultant or school nurse for specific instructions.

Adapted from 2002 Minnesota Child Care Health Consultants Group

Prepared by Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD)

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