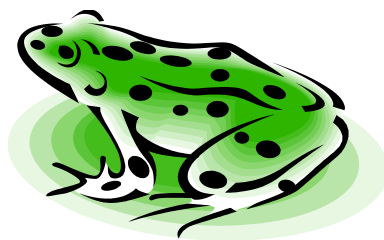


# Teaching your child the importance of good health and hygiene



Produced by St Philip's Marsh Nursery School

**Your 3 year old is probably more interested in getting his hands grubby than in keeping them clean at the moment.**

But teaching him healthy habits like hand-washing while he's young, means he's more likely to carry them on when he's older. Make things fun and they should stick! Looking after yourself can be enjoyable, and the more pleasure your child gets from it, the more likely it is that good habits will become a permanent part of his routine.

Teaching your child how to look after himself is important for good self-esteem, showing him that he is important, and giving him confidence in himself. You can also help your child pick up

healthy habits by practicing what you preach. Children learn by imitation, so give him plenty of opportunity to see you eating healthily, exercising and brushing your teeth, too. Reading him books where the characters are doing the same things, will help reinforce the message as well.

**Here are 10 healthy habits that every 3 year old should know about.**

### **1. Clean hands**

Washing your hands is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.



**How:** encourage your child to wash his hands after using the toilet, before meals and after playing in the garden or with animals. Fill the basin with warm water and teach your child to rub his hands together with soap for 10 seconds, rinse and dry. Make it fun with novelty soaps and towels with children's characters on them. A great book to get the message across is '*Now Wash Your Hands*' by Tony Ross.

## **2. Wiping themselves**

Knowing how to stay clean will help stop the spread of germs.

**How:** teach him how to wipe his bottom, flush the toilet and wash his hands after going to the toilet. Teach girls to wipe from front to back, to avoid bacteria from the bottom being transferred. Moist toilet wipes are a great way to help young children get themselves

clean. To encourage flushing, try waving goodbye to the toilet contents when pulling the chain. Get dolls or teddies to join in the 'fun' as well!

## **3. Fun with food**

A healthy diet will help prevent obesity and keep your child fit and healthy.



**How:** encourage him to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, with plenty of calcium-rich dairy products, protein and carbohydrate for energy. The sticking point is usually the fruit and vegetables, so make it fun by inventing games, songs and characters around them. Use a wide variety of fruit and vegetables and serve it in

different ways – raw and cooked, chopped, sliced, diced and grated. Keep it colourful and use fruit and vegetables to make faces or pictures – a slice of red pepper for a smile or piece of broccoli as a tree, for example. Explain why too much of some things, such as sugar and salt, can be bad, and why certain foods, such as fruit, are good to eat. Involve him in cooking, preparing and serving food, too, to keep him interested.

#### **4. Get active**

Exercise prevents illness, improves mood, and helps his brain and body function properly.

**How:** make activity part of your whole family's daily routine. Research shows that children from active families are less likely to become obese when they become adults. There are lots of places you can take your toddler to run around –

the park, garden, woods, playground or indoor soft-play centre. At home, make sure he's got plenty of toys to encourage activity – balls, beanbags, tricycle, hoops. Even a dance around the room to songs and nursery rhymes is a great way to get some exercise. Get him to move around in different ways – crawling, running, jumping, hopping and so on. You will benefit too!



#### **5. Brushing teeth**

It's important to look after your teeth to prevent tooth decay.

**How:** clean teeth twice a day – morning and bedtime. You'll need to

help and supervise until he's seven, but show him how to open wide and scrub inside and let him try himself. Praise his efforts and make it fun. Play games where you brush the teeth of favourite teddies and toys. Novelty or battery-operated brushes, and those with an egg-timer stand to encourage longer brushing, are good ideas.

## **6. Keep it private**

Playing with his privates in public isn't just unhygienic, it's also embarrassing for both him and you!

**How:** it's best not to make too big a fuss if your child starts to explore the contents of his pants in public. He's just showing a natural curiosity, and you don't want him to end up feeling ashamed of his body. Try to gently distract him with something else. As he

gets older, explain the difference between public and private, and point out that some things are not good to do in public.

## **7. Sleep tight**

Getting enough sleep is vital in helping the body and brain, rest and recuperate.

**How:** teach your child to fall asleep by himself, make sure he goes to bed awake and learns how to drop off on his own. Help him by sticking to a regular time for bed and establishing a routine – bath, drink, book and bed is a great countdown to sleep. If he wakes in the night, settle him with minimum fuss.

## **8. Safety first**

Thousands of children end up in hospital every year because of domestic accidents that could easily be prevented.

**How:** Ensuring your home is safe is essential.

Teaching him basic safety rules now may save him from injury later. Explain why things may be dangerous (hot, sharp, too high), in a language he understands. Children learn by imitation, so be safety-conscious yourself. Never cross the road by dodging between cars, for example, or leave things lying around on the stairs.

### **9. Sun sense**

Skin cancer rates are rising and studies suggest that over-exposure to the sun in childhood can increase the risk.

**How:** teach your child that applying sun cream when the weather is warm is as much part of his routine as brushing his teeth. Explain that the sun is very hot and can burn him if he's not protected. Make applying cream fun by getting him to help (or letting him put some on you). Using sprays and sun cream

wipes can make it easier. Don't forget a sunhat, too.

### **10. Water is good for you**

Drinking water improves concentration and helps the entire body function properly.

**How:** make sure he always has water readily available and ask him regularly during the day if he'd like a drink. Ensure you always give him water with his meals and snacks. Let him choose a cup he likes.

