



# Clean Habits, All by Myself

Less nagging, more independence with everyday hygiene.

## Helps Your Child Grow



### Health, Safety, and Nutrition

When your child understands why, when, and how hygiene routines happen, they are more willing to join in with handwashing and toothbrushing and can gradually complete parts of the routine independently.

## Steps

- Do toothbrushing and handwashing take several reminders? Instead of pulling your child into the routine, help them learn why, when, and how to do it.
- Choose a simple nonfiction picture book about toothbrushing and read about why hygiene matters. Look together at how a toothbrush removes the “yucky stuff” from teeth.
- Once your child understands the reason, practice at predictable times - wash hands after coming home and brush teeth before bed. Over time, the routine itself will cue what comes next.
- Break toothbrushing or handwashing into three or four consistent steps. Use pictures or a short chant so your child can follow along. See [Good Handwashing Habits](/ac/detail?code=XSHXG1) for a step-by-step handwashing activity.
- Let your child finish first, then help with any spots they missed. At the end, notice how clean they feel: “Your hands feel so smooth, and your mouth feels fresh!” Name something specific they did well, too.

## Tips

- When it is time to begin, avoid asking whether your child wants to brush or wash. Offer a choice within the routine: “Do you want to turn on the faucet, or should I help?”
- At this age, your child still needs an adult’s help to brush every tooth thoroughly.

## Observations

- ☐ Cooperates with you during handwashing and toothbrushing
- ☐ Talks with you about events or details in the picture book