



PACIFIC PARENTING TOOLKIT

MODULE 4: CLEAN WATER, HYGIENE, AND SANITATION

1. Background

Across Pacific countries, average household access to basic drinking water and sanitation services in 2024 was 85 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively. (1). However, access to a basic water source does not necessarily indicate that the water is safe. For example, more than 93 per cent of rural households in Kiribati rely on contaminated water sources. (1)

Sanitation also remains a challenge. In 2024, about 17 per cent of people in Pacific countries practised open defecation, which continues to be a major public health concern. Rates vary across countries and are highest in the Solomon Islands (45 per cent), followed by Kiribati (32 per cent). (1) The situation is worse in rural areas. In Kiribati, 50 per cent of the rural population practises open defecation, and in the Solomon Islands the figure is nearly 59 per cent. (1)

Although handwashing is widely promoted, most countries in the Pacific region do not have robust data to track hand hygiene behaviour (i.e. whether households have access to soap and water). Although national campaigns on handwashing and school-based WASH interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in improving hygiene behaviours, household access to handwashing facilities remains low (i.e. 13.8 per cent of households in Kiribati reported having no handwashing facility at all in 2020. (1)

Good oral hygiene is also important from an early age. Regular tooth brushing, a healthy diet, and limiting sugary foods and drinks help protect children's teeth. Pacific Island countries have the highest global rates of dental cavities in baby teeth, affecting about 1 in 2 children. If untreated, cavities can cause pain and make it difficult for children to eat, speak, and play. (2) According to 2019 oral disease data for Fiji, the prevalence of untreated cavities in milk teeth in children 1–9 years of age was 46.7 per cent. (3)

Children and adolescents learn about hygiene and sanitation from the adults around them. Parents and caregivers can help children understand why hygiene is important and gradually take more responsibility for these habits as they grow. Although the Pacific Parenting Toolkit focuses mainly on household practices, community hygiene is also important. Keeping neighbouring homes and shared spaces clean and free from faecal contamination helps reduce the spread of disease and supports healthy environments for families.

1.1 Module Structure

The module follows the structure outlined in Chapter 1 Section 1.4 Content Overview. In addition, there are four annexes at the end of this module, which provide further information or guidance for facilitators and programme managers. These include:

1. **Guidance on Multi-sectoral integration:** identifying potential entry points for clean water, hygiene and sanitation activities across other sectors to encourage a holistic approach to parenting
2. **Programmes from the Region:** Programmes or interventions in the Pacific and globally that make reference to specific clean water, hygiene and sanitation skills.
3. **Facilitator Checklist:** A simple checklist per skill designed to support facilitators in preparing for and delivering the content related to clean water, hygiene and sanitation.
4. **Additional Information:** A brief explanation of how children catch diarrhoea to support facilitators in explaining the main routes of infection and simple prevention strategies to parents and caregivers.

2. Best Practices Across the Life Course

This section focuses on five core skills that support healthy hygiene and well-being across the life course, from early childhood (0–5 years) through to middle childhood (6–10 years), and adolescence (11–18 years). These skills include:

- 1. Model Positive Hygiene Practices**
- 2. Use Safe Water and Water Storage Containers**
- 3. Sun-dry Clothes and Laundry**
- 4. Promote and Maintain Clean Household Spaces**
- 5. Encourage Teeth Brushing Twice a Day**

Good hygiene practices start from an early age and continue as children grow and become progressively more independent in looking after themselves and taking responsibility for their own hygiene. (4) Parents and caregivers need clear information and access to water and sanitation facilities to help their children develop good hygiene habits. These habits should become part of daily routines that work for each family. (5) Discussing hygiene routines with children and practising these actions together reinforces these behaviours. (6) Cooking together is also a good way to combine hygiene and nutrition while spending time as a family. (7)

Skill 1: Model Positive Hygiene Practices

Why It Matters

Children learn hygiene behaviours by observing and imitating their parents and caregivers within the home environment. (8) Consistent modelling of positive hygiene practices across the life course, such as handwashing with soap, tooth brushing, and safe food hygiene, plays an important role in helping children learn and adopt these behaviours. When parents and caregivers practise good hygiene with children and reinforce these actions through daily routines, children are more likely to understand and continue these habits as they grow more independent. (5,9)



See Activity 1 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on modelling positive hygiene practices.

Why this Skill Matters Across the Life Course

- **0–5 years (Early Childhood):** Young children learn hygiene by observing their parents and caregivers. Modelling handwashing, tooth brushing, and safe food practices helps toddlers understand and adopt these behaviours. Practising hygiene together builds routines, reinforces learning, and lays the foundation for independence.
- **6–10 years (Middle Childhood):** Children in this age group develop habits that can last a lifetime. When parents and caregivers continue to model and encourage proper hygiene, such as handwashing before meals, tooth brushing, and safe food handling, children gain confidence, responsibility, and a sense of personal care.
- **11–18 years (Adolescence):** Adolescents become more independent and take greater responsibility for their personal hygiene, including menstrual hygiene for girls. Parents and caregivers who model, reinforce, and discuss positive hygiene practices help adolescents maintain healthy routines, make informed choices, and normalise good hygiene habits that last into adulthood.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Role modelling in daily routines:** Support parents and caregivers to consistently model key hygiene behaviours, as children learn most by watching them. These behaviours include washing hands at important times, brushing teeth, handling food safely, practising menstrual hygiene, using clean drinking water, using toilets or disposing of waste safely, and regularly trimming fingernails. Keeping fingernails short helps prevent dirt and germs from collecting under the nails and entering the body through the mouth .

- **Practise together and name the actions:** Encourage parents and caregivers to practise hygiene routines with children and talk through what they are doing. This strengthens understanding, memory, and skill development across ages.
- **Habit-building over perfection:** Emphasise that regular, simple hygiene behaviours matter more than doing everything perfectly, especially in contexts of limited water, soap, or time.
- **Life-course relevance:** Reinforce that parent/caregiver role modelling shapes hygiene behaviours from early childhood through adolescence, including continued influence on the personal and menstrual hygiene practices of adolescents.

Social Media Messages

- Children copy what they see at home. Show them good hygiene every day.
- Your actions teach hygiene more than words.
- Practise hygiene together. Build habits that last.
- Model good hygiene when your child is young, the habits will stay with them forever

Skill 2: Use Safe Water and Water Storage Containers

Why It Matters

Using clean and safe water, and collecting and storing it in closed containers, helps prevent waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and other infections. (10,11) Contaminated water is a major source of illness, especially in children. Drinking water sources should be located at a safe distance from latrines, wastewater discharge areas, and places where people defecate. This helps keep drinking water safe. (12) When children observe and participate in safe water practices, they develop habits that support lifelong health. (4,9)



See Annex 4 for Additional information on: How do children catch diarrhoea?



See Activity 2 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on using safe water and water storage containers.

Why this Skill Matters Across the Life Course

- **0–5 years (Early Childhood):** Young children are particularly vulnerable to the acute and chronic consequences of waterborne diseases. Using safe, clean water and storing it in closed containers helps prevent acute and chronic microbial infections in the gut that can result in diarrhoea and a failure to absorb nutrients. (13) Boiling water for babies more than 6 months old and involving toddlers in simple practices, such as using a safe cup helps teach them the importance of water safety.
- **6–10 years (Middle Childhood):** Children can take more responsibility for safe water practices, such as pouring water from clean containers and washing hands with safe water. Taking part in these routines helps build habits that prevent illness, support school attendance, and strengthen their understanding of health and hygiene.
- **11–18 years (Adolescence):** Adolescents can actively manage safe water use for themselves and their families. Understanding the importance of storing water in clean containers and keeping sources away from latrines or waste helps protect health. Consistently practising these behaviours promotes lifelong hygiene habits, disease prevention, and responsibility for community and personal well being.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Recognise that water sources may not always be safe:** Explain that water from improved sources such as wells, boreholes, or rainwater systems may still contain harmful germs. Unless water is piped directly to the home from a treated system or comes from a reliable bottled provider, it should be made safer through household water treatment methods before drinking or preparing food for children.
- **Promote household water treatment:** Introduce context-appropriate household water treatment methods such as boiling, filtration, chlorination, or solar disinfection, depending on what is locally available and recommended. Emphasise that treating water is especially important for young children, babies older than six months, and pregnant women.
- **Model safe water use daily:** Support parents and caregivers to consistently use treated and safely handled water for drinking, handwashing, cooking, and cleaning. Children learn safe habits by watching adults.
- **Safe water storage practices:** Encourage storing treated water in clean, covered containers. Handle water carefully using clean hands and utensils to prevent contamination in the home.
- **Protect water from contamination:** Encourage keeping water sources and storage areas away from latrines, drains, animals, and waste. Use practical examples that reflect local conditions.
- **Teach by doing with children:** Encourage parents and caregivers to show and practise with children how to collect, treat, pour, and store water safely, naming the actions as they go so children learn the routine.
- **Routine checking and cleaning:** Emphasise regular cleaning of water containers and storage areas as part of daily or weekly household routines, prioritising consistency over perfection.

Social Media Messages

- Make water safe by boiling it at home.
- Keep water safe at home. Store it in covered containers so germs cannot enter.
- Keep water away from waste to keep families healthy.
- Wash containers often. Protect your drinking water.

Skill 3: Sun-dry Clothes and Laundry

Why It Matters

Drying clothes in direct sunlight reduces microbial contamination, making them safer for children to wear. (14) Flies and other pests are less likely to reproduce on sun-dried laundry, reducing the risk of transmitting diseases.(15) This practice is especially important in households with young children, who are more vulnerable to infections from contaminated clothing. (16)



See Activity 3 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on sun-drying clothes and laundry

Why this Skill Matters Across the Life Course

- **0–5 years (Early Childhood):** Young children are highly susceptible to infections from contaminated clothing. Sun-drying clothes reduces microbial growth and keeps fabrics safe to wear. Toddlers can also be involved in simple tasks, such as helping to hang small items. This helps them learn about cleanliness and hygiene routines.
- **6–10 years (Middle Childhood):** Children can participate more actively in laundry tasks, learning to hang clothes in the sun and understand why it is important. This practice reinforces responsibility, hygiene awareness, and helps prevent illnesses, supporting consistent school attendance and overall health.
- **11–18 years (Adolescence):** Adolescents can take responsibility for managing laundry safely, including drying clothes in direct sunlight. Understanding and practising sun-drying helps prevent microbial contamination, reduce disease risk, and establish lifelong habits for personal and household hygiene.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Model safe laundry practices:** Support parents and caregivers to show safe washing and sun-drying of clothes as part of everyday hygiene routines. Children learn by watching adults.
- **Use sunlight as a hygiene tool:** Promote sun-drying laundry to reduce germs, bacteria, and viruses, linking the practice to better child health and infection prevention.
- **Prevent pests and contamination:** Emphasise hanging freshly washed clothes off the ground and in direct sunlight to prevent flies, pests, and re-contamination.
- **Build simple routines:** Encourage families to make sun-drying a regular part of laundry practices, prioritising consistency over perfection in busy or resource-limited settings.

- **Involve children in learning:** Support parents and caregivers to involve children in safe laundry routines (helping hang clothes, choosing sunny spots), reinforcing hygiene habits across the life course.

Social Media Messages

- Hang it out to dry – sunshine is nature’s disinfectant!
- Dry clean clothes are safe clothes.
- Teach your children to sun-dry laundry.

Skill 4: Promote and Maintain Clean Household Spaces

Why It Matters

Maintaining clean living spaces reduces exposure to germs, pests, and environmental contamination, supporting healthier households, particularly for children. (17) When children observe and participate in cleaning activities at home, they learn that hygiene and sanitation are part of everyday life and personal responsibility. (5) Taking part in community clean-up days also shows that hygiene is important for everyone. These activities help reduce environmental health risks and build community pride and shared responsibility for public spaces. (17)



See Activity 4 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on maintaining clean household sanitation and spaces, and promoting community clean-up days.

Why this Skill Matters Across the Life Course

- **0–5 years (Early Childhood):** Young children learn hygiene and responsibility by observing and helping with simple household cleaning tasks. Maintaining clean living spaces reduces exposure to germs and pests, supporting their health and development.
- **6–10 years (Middle Childhood):** Children can take a more active role in household cleaning routines. This helps them understand that hygiene is part of daily life. Taking part in household tasks and small community clean-up activities also teaches responsibility, teamwork, and the link between a clean environment and good health.
- **11–18 years (Adolescence):** Adolescents can take greater responsibility for keeping household spaces clean and supporting community clean-up activities. Their participation strengthens hygiene practices, environmental awareness, and community responsibility.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Model clean household environments:** Support parents and caregivers to regularly clean living spaces. This helps reduce germs and pests and prevents exposure to faecal contamination from people, pets, or wildlife.
- **Involve children in daily cleaning:** Encourage parents and caregivers to include children in age-appropriate household cleaning tasks. This builds responsibility and understanding of hygiene through practice.
- **Promote safe waste management:** Reinforce proper waste disposal at home and in the community, helping children understand how litter and waste affect health beyond the household.

- **Use of improved toilets:** Promote use of clean toilets for safe containment and disposal of excreta.
- **Community clean-up engagement:** Encourage family participation in community clean-up days to protect shared spaces, strengthen cooperation, and model collective responsibility.
- **Link home and community hygiene:** Emphasise that clean homes and clean communities are connected. Both support family well-being, pride, and respect for shared environments.

Social Media Messages

- Children learn hygiene at home and in the community. Let's lead by example.
- A clean home and a clean community protect our families.
- When we clean together, we stay healthy together.

Skill 5: Encourage Brushing Teeth Twice a Day

Why It Matters

Caring for children’s teeth starts as soon as their first teeth appear, usually around six months of age. Introducing brushing at this stage, with parents and caregivers guiding the process, helps children learn what to do and makes brushing a normal part of daily routines in the morning and at bedtime. (18) Consistent brushing helps remove food particles and plaque, reducing the risk of caries and cavities, gum disease, and other oral health problems in both the short and long term. As children grow and teeth begin to touch each other, parents and caregivers can also introduce cleaning between teeth where possible. Where dental floss or similar tools are available and affordable, gentle flossing can help remove food particles from spaces a toothbrush cannot reach.

As children grow, reinforcing brushing twice a day becomes especially important during middle childhood, when milk teeth fall out and permanent teeth come through. Continued guidance, encouragement, and positive reinforcement help children maintain good oral hygiene habits. Where resources allow, older children can gradually learn to floss with supervision as part of a more complete oral hygiene routine. Early habit-building not only protects children’s teeth but also supports overall health, confidence, and well-being. (19)



See Activity 5 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on encouraging brushing teeth twice a day.

Why this Skill Matters Across the Life Course

- **0–5 years (Early Childhood):** Caring for children’s teeth begins as soon as the first teeth appear, around six months. Brushing with parental guidance teaches toddlers how to clean their teeth properly and establishes it as a normal daily routine. Consistent brushing reduces the risk of cavities, gum disease, and supports overall health.
- **6–10 years (Middle Childhood):** As children lose milk teeth and permanent teeth emerge, continued guidance and encouragement are crucial. Brushing twice a day reinforces healthy oral hygiene habits, prevents dental problems, and promotes responsibility, confidence, and self-care skills.
- **11–18 years (Adolescence):** Adolescents take increasing responsibility for their oral health. Reinforcing brushing twice a day, flossing where that is possible, along with learning about dental care, helps prevent long-term dental problems and supports overall health, confidence, and well-being.

Disability Considerations



Children with disabilities should also brush their teeth regularly. Parents and caregivers may need to provide extra support, depending on the child's needs. For example, some children may benefit from a different type of toothbrush that is more comfortable for them to use. Parents and caregivers should look for practical ways to help children brush their teeth every day and maintain the habit. If they face challenges, they should seek advice or support from health workers or community leaders.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Start early and normalise routines:** Support parents and caregivers to introduce tooth brushing early and embed it into daily morning and bedtime routines, treating brushing as a regular part of family life.
- **Model and guide brushing skills:** Encourage parents and caregivers to demonstrate correct brushing and provide hands-on support for younger children, gradually shifting to supervision as children grow.
- **Reinforce twice-daily consistency:** Emphasise brushing teeth twice a day, every day, ideally after major meals and always before bedtime. Encourage maintaining this routine during life transitions (such as school changes, holidays, or adolescence) and during key stages of dental development.
- **Promote practical alternatives when brushing is not possible:** When brushing is not possible, encourage children to rinse their mouth with clean water after eating. This helps remove food particles and reduce sugar on teeth.
- **Introduce flossing habits:** As children grow and their teeth move closer together, introduce cleaning between teeth. If dental floss or similar tools are available and affordable, children can learn to floss gently with supervision and should be encouraged to do this every day.
- **Use positive encouragement:** Use praise, reminders, songs, or charts to motivate children, focusing on effort and positive outcomes rather than fear-based messages.
- **Build age-appropriate responsibility:** Support a life-course approach: parent-led brushing in early childhood, shared for brushing and flossing responsibility in middle childhood, and child-led brushing and flossing in adolescence, linking oral hygiene to health, comfort, and confidence.

Social Media Messages

- Bright smiles start early; brush your baby's teeth as soon as the first one appears.
- Morning and bedtime brushing is the secret to strong, healthy teeth.
- Floss every day to help keep teeth healthy!
- Permanent teeth are on their way; good habits now make them stronger.
- Brush, floss, rinse, smile, repeat!



Activities for Facilitators

Activity 1

Supporting Skill 1: Model Positive Hygiene Practices

Purpose: This activity aims to reinforce hygiene habits by encouraging parents and caregivers to model key practices and practise them together with children.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials Needed

- Soap and water (or hand sanitiser where water is limited)
- Safe food preparation items (e.g. clean bowl, water)
- Menstrual hygiene materials for adolescents (where appropriate)
- Optional: simple chart, calendar, or stickers

Steps

1. **Discuss:** Facilitators explain that hygiene helps keep the family healthy and strong.
2. **Demonstrate:** Parents and caregivers practise modelling key behaviours (e.g. handwashing for 20 seconds, brushing teeth, washing food, safe menstrual hygiene). Facilitators can teach parents and caregivers a 4-5 step routine:
 1. Wet hands with clean water
 2. Apply soap and rub palms together
 3. Rub between fingers and around nails
 4. Rub the backs of hands and thumbs
 5. Rinse well and dry with a clean towel or air dry
3. **Practise together:** Facilitators encourage parents and caregivers to practise handwashing with their children at home and offer encouragement and praise.
4. **Build routines:** Identify when these practices fit naturally into daily life (after toilet use, before meals, morning and bedtime).
5. **Reinforce:** Use a simple chart or calendar to mark shared practice and celebrate effort rather than perfection.

Activity 2

Supporting Skill 2: Use Safe Water and Water Storage Containers

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers explore how children can help with safe water practices at home.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials Needed

- Clean water container with lid
- Cup or ladle used for drinking water
- Soap and water (or hand sanitiser)
- Optional: example of household water treatment materials (e.g., pot for boiling, filter, chlorine tablets)
- Flipchart or board and markers

Steps

1. Start the discussion: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *Where does your household usually get drinking water?*
- *How do you know if the water is safe to drink?*

Discuss common water sources in the community and the importance of protecting drinking water from contamination.

2. Demonstrate safe water collection: Use the container to show how water should be collected from a safe source such as a tap, rainwater tank, or protected well. Emphasise:

- using clean containers
- avoiding contact between dirty hands or cups and stored water
- closing containers properly after filling.

3. Discuss household water treatment: Explain that when the safety of water is uncertain, families may treat water at home. Discuss common methods such as:

- boiling water
- filtering
- using chlorine tablets (where available and appropriate).

Explain that adolescents or older children may help with these tasks under parent/caregiver supervision.

4. Practise cleaning and storing containers: Invite parents and caregivers to demonstrate how they clean water containers. Reinforce that containers should be:

- washed regularly with soap and clean water
- covered with a lid
- stored off the ground and away from waste or animals.

5. Identify ways children can help: Ask parents and caregivers what children aged 5–10 can safely help with, such as:

- fetching water with supervision
- using their own clean cup
- washing cups after use
- reminding family members to keep containers covered

Discuss how these tasks help build responsibility and hygiene habits.

6. Build family routines: Encourage parents and caregivers to establish simple household routines, such as:

- a **daily check** to ensure drinking water is covered and clean
- a **weekly routine** for washing containers
- reminding children to wash hands before handling drinking water.

Activity 3

Supporting Skill 3: Sun-dry Clothes and Laundry

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers explore how everyday routines such as washing and drying clothes can teach children important hygiene habits.

Time: 30-45 minutes

Materials Needed

- Flipchart or board
- Markers
- Optional: cloth or clothing item for demonstration

Steps

1. Explore existing knowledge: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *How do you usually wash and dry clothes at home?*
- *Why is it important to dry clothes well?*

Write key ideas on the flipchart.

2. Build understanding: Facilitate a discussion about how sun-drying clothes helps keep them hygienic by reducing germs, moisture, and flies. Emphasise that fully drying clothes also prevents bad smells and skin irritation.

3. Identify ways children can help: Ask parents and caregivers what children aged 6–10 can safely help with during laundry. Examples may include:

- helping rinse small clothes
- handing clothes to hang on the line
- collecting dry clothes and folding them.

Discuss which tasks require supervision.

4. Practise explaining the routine to a child: In pairs, parents and caregivers practise explaining to each other why clothes should be washed and dried in the sun.

Encourage simple explanations that use age-appropriate language depending on the ages of the parent/caregiver's children, such as:

"The sun helps keep our clothes clean and safe for our bodies."

5. Reinforce safe drying practices: Discuss simple practices that keep laundry clean:

- hanging clothes off the ground
- keeping laundry away from rubbish or animals
- ensuring clothes dry completely before wearing or storing them.

6. Build regular family routines: Encourage parents and caregivers to involve children in small laundry tasks during regular washing days, praising their effort and helping them feel proud of contributing to family hygiene.

Activity 4

Supporting Skill 4: Promote and Maintain Clean Household Spaces

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers teach hygiene, responsibility, and care for the community by involving children in household cleaning, safe sanitation practices, and community waste management activities.

Time: 45 minutes

Steps:

- 1. Guide household tasks:** Facilitators show parents and caregivers how to break cleaning and sanitation tasks into small steps and choose age-appropriate responsibilities, allowing children to practise while parents/caregivers guide without taking over. Tasks may include tidying spaces, helping keep toilets clean, and placing waste in the correct containers.
- 2. Build simple routines:** Parents and caregivers practise creating easy daily or weekly schedules or checklists for cleaning, toilet use, and waste disposal, and discuss how to keep these routines consistent and encouraging.
- 3. Talk about waste and cleanliness:** Parents and caregivers practise explaining waste management using simple stories, questions, or sorting activities. Facilitators introduce the **3R concept (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)** to help children understand how to minimize waste. Examples can include reducing unnecessary waste, reusing items such as bags or containers when possible, and recycling where facilities exist. [See Middle Childhood: Skill 3: Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely.](#) Families can also practise simple waste separation, such as sorting waste into degradable and non-degradable piles. Where recycling systems are limited, children can still learn to identify recyclable materials and keep them separate for later collection or handover to recycling facilities.
- 4. Promote safe sanitation:** Facilitators discuss the health risks of open defecation and support parents and caregivers to encourage consistent use of safe household toilets. Parents and caregivers practise explaining to children why toilets should always be used and how to maintain hygiene after toilet use, including handwashing with soap.
- 5. Connect with the community:** Facilitators support parents and caregivers to plan safe, simple community clean-up activities and discuss how to talk with children about keeping shared spaces clean and disposing of waste responsibly.
- 6. Link home and community habits:** Parents and caregivers reflect on how lessons from community clean-ups, such as reducing waste, separating waste, and maintaining clean sanitation facilities, can be reinforced through daily routines at home.

Activity 5

Supporting Skill 5: Encourage Brushing Teeth Twice a Day

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers support children in developing strong oral hygiene habits.

Time: 60 min

Materials Needed

- Flipchart or board
- Markers
- Optional: toothbrush and toothpaste for demonstration, floss if available

Box 1. Choosing a Toothbrush and Toothpaste

- **Toothbrush bristles:**
 - Use a soft-bristled toothbrush for children and adults. Soft bristles clean teeth effectively while protecting gums and tooth enamel. Medium or hard bristles may damage gums and are generally not recommended for children.
- **Toothbrush size:** Choose a brush with a small head and comfortable handle suitable for the child's age so it can reach all teeth easily.
- **Toothpaste:** Use fluoride toothpaste, which helps prevent tooth decay and strengthens teeth.
 - **Under 3 years:** a smear (rice-grain size) of toothpaste
 - **3–6 years:** a pea-sized amount
 - **Older children and adults:** a pea-sized amount
- **Toothbrush care:**
 - Replace toothbrushes every **3–4 months** or sooner if the bristles become worn.



Disability Considerations

- Children with disabilities may benefit from toothbrushes with different shapes or handles that are easier to hold.

Steps

1. Start the discussion: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *When do children usually brush their teeth at home?*
- *What challenges do families face in maintaining twice-daily brushing?*

Write responses on the flipchart.

2. Reinforce key moments for brushing: Emphasise that brushing twice a day (morning and before bedtime) is essential for preventing tooth decay and gum problems. Discuss why brushing before bedtime is especially important because food and sugar left on teeth overnight can cause tooth decay.

3. Demonstrate brushing routines: Using a toothbrush (if available), demonstrate how parents and caregivers can encourage children to brush for about two minutes and ensure all parts of the teeth are cleaned. Explain that parents and caregivers can strengthen this habit by brushing alongside children, keeping routines consistent, and making the activity positive and engaging.

4. Practise explaining the routine to a child: In pairs, parents and caregivers practise explaining a brushing routine to a child using simple, encouraging language (for example: *"We brush our teeth in the morning and before bed to keep them strong and healthy."*). Where available, also encourage parents and caregivers to introduce **flossing** as part of the daily tooth brushing routine.

5. Explore ways to make brushing enjoyable: Ask parents and caregivers to share ideas for making brushing more engaging for children, such as:

- singing a short song
- counting together
- using a timer
- brushing together as a family.

6. Plan consistent routines: Encourage parents and caregivers to think about how brushing can be clearly linked to daily routines such as waking up and preparing for bed, helping children remember the habit.

3. Age-Specific Skills Sections

This section builds on the life course skills outlined in the previous section and identifies specific skills that apply to children’s hygiene and sanitation at different stages of growth. It is organised by age group: early childhood (0–5 years), middle childhood (6–10 years), and adolescence (11–18 years).

To avoid repetition, this section does not restate all life course skills in full. Instead, it highlights priority skills for each age group that are most relevant to that stage of growth and development. These skills reflect the same core principles introduced earlier, but provide more detailed, practical guidance tailored to the needs of parents and caregivers at each stage. Where skills overlap with those outlined in Section 2, readers are directed back to that section for full detail.

This approach helps facilitators focus discussions, activities, and messaging on the skills that matter most at each stage, while reinforcing continuity across the life course. The skills included in this section are applicable to both female and male caregivers, recognising the important role everyone plays in shaping children’s hygiene habits and well-being. Parent support programmes and activities should pull the relevant content applicable to the parents and caregivers they are supporting and the age of the children they would like support with.

3.a. Early Childhood (0–5 years)

This section focuses on practical, age-specific skills for supporting healthy hygiene, safe water use, and sanitation in early childhood (0–5 years). It highlights three key areas where parents and caregivers can have a meaningful impact on their child’s health and well-being.

The skills highlighted in this section are:

- 1. Encourage Handwashing with Soap at Key Times**
- 2. Gentle Toilet Training and Safe Disposal Practices**
- 3. Create a Regular Bathing and Cleaning Routine**

Each skill is presented with guidance, actionable tips, and practical examples to help parents and caregivers nurture healthy habits while fostering independence, confidence, and lifelong hygiene routines in young children.

Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing with Soap at Key Times (before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet or cleaning a nappy/diaper)

Why It Matters

Handwashing with soap at key times, such as before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet or changing a nappy/diaper, is important for protecting young children from infectious diseases. Children under five are especially vulnerable to illnesses such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections because their immune systems are still developing. (4,9) When parents and caregivers consistently wash their hands before handling food, they reduce the risk of transferring germs to children and their meals. This helps protect the whole household from disease. (5) Additionally, young children learn by observing adults. When parents and caregivers model proper handwashing behaviour, children are more likely to adopt the habit themselves, helping to establish healthy routines that can continue throughout early childhood and beyond.



See Activity 6 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on encouraging handwashing with soap at key times.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Handwashing with soap protects children from disease:** Wash hands with soap before food and after using the toilet or changing nappies/diapers to help prevent diarrhoea, respiratory infections, and other illnesses.
- **Parents' actions matter:** Wash hands together to show them how to do it correctly and encourage them to adopt the habit. Children learn by observing their parents and caregivers.

Box 2. Steps for washing hands correctly

Wash your hands according to these adapted WHO guidelines and steps (20):

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold).
2. Apply enough soap to cover all surfaces of your hands.
3. Rub your hands together to create lather, making sure to scrub all areas including the back of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

- **Start by guiding, then encourage independence:** Help children wash hands and over time, let them practise on their own while checking in.

- **Consistency builds lifelong habits:** Wash hands at key times every day to help children develop routines that last throughout childhood.
- **Positive reinforcement helps children repeat good behaviour:** Ask your children if they remembered to wash their hands and praise them when they do, to build confidence and reinforce the habit.
- **Handwashing with soap opens conversations about hygiene and sanitation:** After using the toilet, talk with children about hygiene and sanitation and why clean hands are important.

Social Media Messages

- Wash your hands before cooking or eating and teach them healthy habits.
- Clean hands protect your child from germs and disease. Make handwashing part of your daily routine.
- Wash before preparing food to protect your little ones.
- After the potty or diaper change, wash your hands!
- Children learn how to wash their hands by watching you.
- Form healthy habits early: guide your child to wash hands every time they use the toilet.
- Praise children for washing their hands so they remember to wash next time, too!

Skill 2: Toilet Training and Safe Disposal Practices

Why It Matters

Toilet training is an important step in a young child's development. It usually begins when a child shows readiness, often between 18 months and 3 years. Toilet training works best when parents and caregivers use patience, encouragement, and positive guidance, rather than pressure or punishment. (21,22) Supporting children calmly during this stage helps build their confidence and teaches them what safe and appropriate toilet use looks like. Safe disposal of nappies/diapers and regular use of toilets or latrines also protect family and community health. When faeces are not disposed of safely, such as through open defecation or improper disposal of nappies/diapers, harmful bacteria can spread. This increases the risk of diarrhoea and other infections, especially for young children. (23) Teaching children where to go to the toilet and reinforcing hygiene behaviours, such as handwashing after toileting, helps establish routines that continue into later childhood and beyond. Positive reinforcement is important so use praise to help reinforce safe behaviours. (24)



See Activity 7 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on gentle toilet training and safe disposal practices.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Toilet training takes time:** Support parents and caregivers to take a pause when progress feels frustrating.
- **Child-led toilet training:** Support parents and caregivers to follow children's readiness cues, introduce toilet training gradually, and respond patiently to accidents.
- **Positive reinforcement over punishment:** Encourage praise, reassurance, and celebration of effort to build children's confidence and motivation. Avoid shaming or punishment.
- **Consistent daily routines:** Encourage regular toilet use, handwashing after toileting, and safe disposal of nappies/diapers as part of daily routines.
- **Link toilet use to hygiene learning:** Use toilet training as an opportunity to teach simple concepts about germs, cleanliness, and why handwashing matters.
- **Protect household and community health:** Promote safe disposal practices to reduce environmental contamination and protect children and communities from illness.

Social Media Messages

- Toilet training is a journey. Be patient, celebrate success, and reinforce hygiene.

- Safe nappy/diaper disposal keeps children, family, and community healthy.
- Gentle potty guidance + safe toilets = lifelong healthy habits.
- Accidents happen! Use encouragement and not punishment when they do.

Skill 3: Create a Regular Bathing and Cleaning Routine

Why It Matters

Regular bathing and cleaning help keep young children healthy and comfortable. Washing removes dirt and germs from the skin. Young children often crawl, play on the ground, and put their hands or toys in their mouths. This increases their exposure to germs. Bathing children and cleaning the toys they put in their mouths helps reduce the risk of skin infections, diarrhoeal disease, and other illnesses.

Establishing simple routines early in life also helps children know what to expect and supports a sense of safety and well-being. (23) Bath time is also an important opportunity for learning and connection. When parents and caregivers involve children in washing, drying, and cleaning up in age-appropriate ways, children begin to understand basic hygiene practices and develop independence over time. Keeping bathing routines consistent, calm, and positive helps children feel relaxed and more willing to participate as they grow. (25) Bathing can also be an important part of establishing a bedtime routine.

Box 3. Bathing guidance depends on the child's age and development

- **Newborns:** Give sponge baths until the umbilical cord stump falls off and heals. Keep the cord clean and dry, support the baby's head and neck, and never leave the baby unattended.
- **Young infants:** After the cord heals but before the baby can sit independently, shallow tub baths can be used with close adult support.
- **Older infants and children:** When children can sit independently, bath time can become more interactive and enjoyable.
- **Children should never be left alone in or near water, even for a moment, not even in shallow water. Close adult supervision is always essential.**



See Activity 8 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on creating a regular bathing and cleaning routine

Essential Building Blocks

- **Establish calm, consistent routines:** Support parents and caregivers to set predictable bathing and cleaning times that are positive, age-appropriate, and part of daily family life.
- **Link bathing to health and hygiene:**

- Reinforce that washing removes dirt and germs and helps prevent infections and illness. Use bathing time to teach simple hygiene skills.
- Link bathing with other hygiene routines, such as handwashing, tooth brushing, and wearing clean clothes.
- Suggest how to minimise cross infection from shared bars of soap and towels.
- **Always Ensure water safety:** Emphasise close supervision during bathing, with age-appropriate practices (sponge baths for newborns, shallow water with support for infants, supervised interactive baths for toddlers).
- **Encourage learning through participation:** Support parents and caregivers to involve children in washing, drying, and cleaning up. Help them learn by doing.
- **Build gradual independence:** Promote a life-course approach where children slowly take on more self-care tasks with guidance, balancing supervision with opportunities to practise and build confidence.

Social Media Messages

- Bath time does not have to be perfect. Keeping it regular is what matters.
- Little hands, busy feet, lots of play. A regular wash helps keep germs away.
- Bath time is more than getting clean. It is time together.
- When you wash with your child, you teach without words.



Activities for Facilitators

Activity 6

Supporting Early Childhood Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing with Soap at Key Times (before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet or cleaning a nappy/diaper)

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers teach children good handwashing habits by washing hands together at key times.

Time: 30 minutes

Steps

1. Introduce the importance of handwashing: Begin by briefly explaining that washing hands with soap helps remove germs that can cause illness. Emphasise that children learn best by watching and practising with their parents and caregivers.

2. Model and sing: Demonstrate proper handwashing with soap and water. While washing, sing a simple handwashing song or count slowly to show how long handwashing should take (count slowly to 20). Explain that songs or rhymes can help children remember the steps and make the activity fun.

3. Name the key moments: Discuss with parents and caregivers the important times when children should wash their hands. Encourage them to say these moments aloud with children, such as:

- before eating or handling food
- after using the toilet or changing nappies/diapers
- after playing outside or touching animals

Naming these moments helps children understand when and why handwashing is needed.

4. Practise together: Invite parents and caregivers to practise guiding children through handwashing step by step. Emphasise gentle guidance and supervision, allowing children to participate by rubbing soap, rinsing, or drying their hands.

5. Build a daily routine: Encourage parents and caregivers to identify regular moments during the day when handwashing will happen, such as before meals or after toilet use. Consistent routines help children remember and repeat the behaviour.

6. Encourage growing independence: Discuss how parents and caregivers can praise children for trying and gradually support them to wash their hands more independently as they grow and develop their skills.

Activity 7

Supporting Early Childhood Skill 2: Gentle Toilet Training and Safe Disposal Practices

Purpose: To support parents and caregivers to teach young children a simple, safe, and consistent toilet routine.

Time: 45 minutes

Steps

1. Introduce the routine: Explain that regular toilet routines help children learn hygiene habits, build independence, and reduce accidents. Emphasise that toilet training takes time and patience, and that gentle encouragement works better than pressure or punishment.

2. Demonstrate the steps: Using a toilet, potty, or simple visual example, demonstrate the basic steps of a toilet routine.

The facilitator may model a simple reminder phrase that parents and caregivers can use with children, such as: *"Toilet, wipe, flush, wash."*

3. Coach parents to guide children: Discuss how parents and caregivers can guide children step by step at first, offering reminders and support. Explain that as children become more confident, parents and caregivers can gradually encourage them to complete more steps independently.

4. Reinforce positive behaviour: Demonstrate how parents and caregivers can praise children for trying, remembering steps, or asking to use the toilet. Positive encouragement helps children feel proud and motivated to repeat the behaviour. Remind parents and caregivers that accidents are a normal part of the learning process and that progress is not always linear.

5. Support observation and gentle reminders: Encourage parents and caregivers to watch for signs that children may need to use the toilet and to offer gentle reminders at regular times, such as after meals or before bedtime. Emphasise supporting the child without taking over tasks they can try themselves.

6. Problem-solve common challenges: Facilitate a short discussion on common difficulties, such as accidents, fear of the toilet, reluctance to wash hands, or difficulty remembering the steps. Invite parents and caregivers to share experiences and discuss practical ways to respond calmly and supportively.



Disability Considerations

Children with disabilities who may need additional support, adaptive tools, or more time to learn the routine

Activity 8

Supporting Early Childhood Skill 3: Creating a Safe and Positive Bathing Routine

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers teach young children hygiene habits through guided, calm, and consistent bathing routines.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials Needed

- Soap
- Water container or basin
- Towel
- Clean clothes
- Optional: visual aids or picture cards of washing steps

Steps

1. **Prepare together:** Ask parents and caregivers how they usually prepare for bath time. Ask a parent/caregiver to play the part of a child and demonstrate preparing for bathing together with a child. Parents/caregivers and children gather soap, water, towels, and clean clothes before starting.

- Discussion question: What challenges do families face in preparing for bath time?



See Module 1: Child Protection and Safety

- **Life Course: Skill 6 Water Safety**

2. **Guide and name the steps:** Explain that during bathing, parents and caregivers can gently guide children through the process while naming each step.

Facilitators can demonstrate how parents and caregivers can turn these steps into a simple song or rhyme to make learning enjoyable.

Facilitators to explain hygiene precautions such as:

- the importance of using separate towels for each person where possible to reduce the spread of infections.
- the difference between body soap and laundry soap.
 - Body soap is gentle and safe for skin, while laundry soap may cause skin irritation and should not be used for bathing.
- keeping bathing items clean and dry to prevent bacteria growth.

3. **Encourage participation:** Explain that parents and caregivers can encourage children to take part in simple tasks appropriate to their age. Examples:

- Holding the soap
- Rinsing with a cup
- Washing their arms or legs

Explain that participation helps children build skills and confidence.

4. **Reinforce positively:** Encourage parents and caregivers to praise children's efforts during bathing. Examples:

- "You washed your hands very well."
- "Your body is clean and healthy."

Explain that positive reinforcement helps children enjoy the routine and learn faster.

5. **Build independence:** Explain that as children grow, they can gradually take on more bathing steps while parents and caregivers continue supervision for safety.

Parents and caregivers can:

- Let children wash some body parts themselves
- Encourage them to remember the steps

3.b. Middle Childhood (6–10 years)

This section focuses on practical, age-specific skills for supporting healthy hygiene, safe water use, and sanitation in middle childhood (6–10 years). It highlights five key areas where parents and caregivers can guide children as they take increasing responsibility for their own health and well being.

The skills highlighted in this section are:

- 1. Encourage Handwashing at Key Times**
- 2. Supporting Children to Manage Personal Hygiene Independently**
- 3. Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely**
- 4. Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly**
- 5. Helping with Keeping the House and Toilet Clean**

Each skill is presented with guidance, actionable tips, and practical examples to help parents and caregivers support children’s growing independence, reinforce healthy habits, and build confidence in maintaining lifelong hygiene practices.

Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing at Key Times

Why It Matters

During middle childhood, children become more independent and curious about everyday activities such as preparing food, playing outdoors, travelling to school, and helping with household tasks. This stage provides an important opportunity for parents and caregivers to reinforce handwashing with soap at key moments when germs are most likely to spread.

Children may already be familiar with some handwashing habits learned in early childhood, such as washing hands before eating and after using the toilet. As they grow older, parents and caregivers can help them better understand why handwashing is important at specific times, including before cooking or handling food, before eating, after using the toilet, after playing outside, after touching animals, or whenever hands may carry germs. These key moments are widely recognised as critical opportunities for preventing the spread of infection in households and communities. (6,26)

Handwashing with soap removes germs that can spread through contact with contaminated surfaces, food, or hands that touch the mouth, nose, or eyes. Promoting handwashing at these key moments can significantly reduce the risk of diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory infections among children and families. (27,28) In addition, teaching children to avoid touching their mouth, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands is an important basic hygiene practice, as these are common entry points for germs into the body. (29) Encouraging this habit alongside regular handwashing can further reduce the spread of disease.

Helping children recognise these moments supports them in making safer decisions as they spend more time playing, travelling, and eating independently. For example, washing hands before cooking or helping prepare food helps prevent germs from being transferred to meals and protects the health of the whole family. Cooking together and completing daily tasks provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to model good hygiene, explain how germs spread, and support children to take increasing responsibility for their own hygiene as they grow. (28)



See Activity 9 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on encouraging handwashing at key times.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Teach key handwashing moments:** Support parents and caregivers to help children recognise important times to wash hands with soap, such as before eating, before cooking or handling food, after using the toilet, after playing outside, and after touching animals or dirty objects.

- **Embed hygiene in daily routines:** Encourage parents and caregivers to make handwashing a regular step in everyday activities, such as washing hands before preparing food or eating together.
- **Model and practise together:** Encourage parents and caregivers to wash hands alongside children and demonstrate correct technique, reinforcing that hygiene practices apply to everyone in the household.
- **Explain the purpose clearly:** Support parents and caregivers to explain, in simple and reassuring language, how germs can spread from hands to food, surfaces, or mouths, and how handwashing helps keep the whole family healthy. This should include explaining to children that germs can also enter the body when they touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands, and encouraging them to reduce and avoid this habit as they grow and understand why.
- **Promote growing responsibility:** Encourage children to recognise when their hands may be dirty and wash them independently, using reminders and praise to reinforce positive hygiene habits.

Social Media Messages

- Keep babies hands clean
- Encourage children to not touch their mouth, eyes and nose with dirty hands
- Sing the handwashing song together!
- Wash hands before food, after play, and after the toilet – it only takes 20 seconds!
- Cooking together starts with clean hands.
- When in doubt, wash with soap.

Skill 2: Supporting Growing Children to Manage Personal Hygiene Independently

Why it Matters

During middle childhood, children are ready to take increasing responsibility for their personal hygiene. Building on routines established in early childhood, children can begin washing their bodies and hair independently and take pride in doing so regularly. Supporting children to practise these skills helps build confidence, independence, and a sense of responsibility for their own health. (30) Teaching children to keep their personal items clean, such as using their own towel, also helps reduce the spread of germs within the household. As children become more independent, gentle supervision, encouragement, and positive reinforcement help ensure these hygiene habits are maintained and strengthened over time. (23)



See Activity 10 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on supporting children to manage personal hygiene independently.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Provide guidance, and then step back:** Support parents and caregivers to demonstrate personal hygiene tasks (washing body and hair) and gradually allow children to practise independently with supervision.
- **Use praise and encouragement to reinforce good habits:** Reinforce effort and progress to build children's confidence and motivation to care for their own hygiene.
- **Build consistent self-care routines:** Encourage regular bathing, handwashing, and tooth brushing as daily routines that children can manage with reminders.
- **Promote personal item hygiene:** Teach children to use their own towels and other personal items and keep them clean and dry to reduce the spread of germs. Personal items include objects owned and used by a person such as:
 - Hygiene items: toothbrush, soap, towel (deodorant for older children)
 - Clothing: shirts, shoes, underwear
 - Other: hairbrush, drinking cup or bottle
- **Support growing responsibility:** Emphasise that parent/caregiver guidance remains important as children develop independence. Reinforce that lifelong hygiene habits protect health and well-being.

Social Media Messages

- Growing independence, growing confidence.
- Kids take charge! My towel, my soap, my washing routine.

Skill 3: Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely

Why It Matters

As children grow more independent, learning how to dispose of rubbish properly helps protect the home and community from germs, pests, and illness. Poor waste disposal can contaminate living areas and increase the risk of disease, especially for children. (17) Teaching children where rubbish belongs and why it matters helps them understand their role in keeping shared spaces clean and healthy. Caring for shared spaces also helps children develop respect for their environment and understand that hygiene is everyone's responsibility. These habits support healthier households and communities and reinforce lessons learned at school and in community programmes.



See Activity 12 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on teaching children to care for shared spaces and dispose of waste safely.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Model safe waste disposal:** Support parents and caregivers to show children where rubbish belongs, how to separate waste where relevant, and why proper disposal prevents germs, pests, and illness.
- **3R Principle:** Introduce the 3R principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) by helping children understand how to reduce unnecessary waste, reuse items such as bags or containers when possible, and separate recyclable materials where facilities exist.
- **Build responsibility for shared spaces:** Encourage families to involve children in keeping rooms, play areas, and common spaces clean, reinforcing that caring for shared spaces is everyone's responsibility.
- **Link hygiene to health and safety:** Connect cleaning and waste disposal to personal, family, and community health, reinforcing messages children learn at school or in the community.
- **Teaching without fear:** Encourage parents and caregivers to use simple language to explain about germs, diseases, and infections. It's important that children learn about germs in a reassuring way, without fear.
- **Foster environmental pride and care:** Promote respect for the home, community, and environment by helping children see how small daily actions like reducing waste, reusing useful items, and sorting waste for recycling, can help protect people and nature.
- **Reinforce through routine and praise:** Encourage consistent routines for tidying and waste disposal, including simple waste separation (e.g., degradable

and non-degradable) where appropriate. Provide positive feedback to strengthen habits and motivation.

Social Media Messages

- Clean spaces start with small actions that everyone in the family can take.
- The bin is the right place.
- Caring for our home means caring for each other.
- Little helpers keep our community clean.

Skill 4: Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly

Why It Matters

During middle childhood, children often begin getting drinking water on their own when they are thirsty. Teaching children where safe drinking water comes from, how to use a clean cup, and how to wash and store it properly helps reduce the risk of water borne diseases such as diarrhoea. (1) These skills become increasingly important as children spend more time playing, travelling, and eating independently. Helping children understand how water, sanitation, and hygiene are connected reinforces good habits learned earlier in life. (30)



See Activity 11 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on teaching children to use water safely and responsibly.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Model safe water use:** Support parents and caregivers to show children where safe drinking water comes from, how to use clean cups, and how to wash and store water safely.
- **Link water, hygiene, and health:** Reinforce how safe water use and hygiene prevent illness (e.g., diarrhoea), connecting water practices to handwashing, food safety, and daily hygiene. Clarify that some sources, such as treated piped water or quality-verified bottled water may already be safe for drinking. When this assurance is not available, families should treat water at the household level (for example by boiling, filtering, or chlorination) before drinking or preparing food.
- **Teach by doing with supervision:** Encourage parents and caregivers to involve children in fetching and using water safely, with guidance and supervision.
- **Support growing independence:** Encourage parents and caregivers to put cups and safe drinking water in a place that children can reach, so they can learn to help themselves when they are thirsty.
- **Embed lifelong habits:** Integrate safe water practices into daily routines and reinforce why these habits matter for family and community health across the life course.

Social Media Messages

- Clean water, clean cup, healthy child.
- Thirsty? Choose safe water by yourself.
- Wash your cup after you drink.

Skill 5: Helping with Keeping the House and Toilet Clean

Why It Matters

During middle childhood, children develop a stronger sense of responsibility and can begin to help with simple household tasks. Involving children in keeping the home and toilet clean helps reinforce hygiene habits, builds responsibility, and supports a healthy home environment. (1) When parents and caregivers guide children through small cleaning tasks and explain why they matter, children learn that keeping shared spaces clean protects the health of the whole family and community.



See Activity 12 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on teaching children to use water safely and responsibly.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Teach simple and safe cleaning practices:** Support parents and caregivers to show children how to help with basic cleaning tasks, such as tidying play areas, wiping surfaces, or helping keep toilets or latrines clean. Reinforce handwashing after chores to prevent the spread of germs.
- **Promote shared responsibility at home:** Encourage families to involve both girls and boys in small, age-appropriate household tasks. Emphasise that keeping the home and toilet clean is everyone's responsibility.
- **Link cleanliness to health:** Help parents and caregivers explain how cleaning the home and toilet reduces germs and helps prevent illness, connecting household hygiene to the health of the family and community.
- **Guide participation with fun!:** Encourage parents and caregivers to guide children step by step when learning new tasks. Try to make cleaning practices fun and then gradually allow children to take on small responsibilities while providing reminders and support.
- **Build pride in caring for shared spaces:** Promote positive attitudes toward helping at home by praising children's efforts and encouraging pride in maintaining clean and healthy living environments.

Social Media Messages

- Clean home, healthy family.
- Everyone helps; everyone benefits.



Activities for Facilitators

Activity 9

Supporting Middle Childhood Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing at Key Times

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers reflect on everyday situations when hands may carry germs and how handwashing with soap can prevent the spread of illness.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials Needed

- Flipchart or board
- Markers or pens
- Optional: picture cards showing daily activities (playing outside, using the toilet, touching animals, preparing food, eating)

Steps

1. Brainstorm everyday activities: Facilitators ask parents and caregivers to think about a typical day and list activities when hands might become dirty or carry germs (for example playing outside, using the toilet, touching animals, preparing food, or eating).

2. Identify critical handwashing moments: Together, the group identifies key times when handwashing with soap should happen. The facilitator ensures the following moments are highlighted:

- before cooking or handling food
- before eating
- after using the toilet
- after cleaning a child or changing nappies/diapers
- after playing outside or touching animals.

3. Discuss why these moments matter: Facilitators explain how germs can spread from hands to food, mouths, and household surfaces. Parents and caregivers discuss how washing hands at these moments helps prevent illness such as diarrhoea.

4. Practise explaining handwashing to children: Parents and caregivers work in pairs to practise explaining one of these moments to a child using simple language. For example: “Before we cook or touch food, we wash our hands with soap to keep the food clean.”

5. Build daily routines: Parents and caregivers discuss how they can remind children to wash their hands at these key moments and how consistent routines and praise can help children develop good hygiene habits.

Key messages:

- Washing hands before cooking or preparing food is especially important for protecting family health and food safety.
- Parents and caregivers to involve children in identifying key moments for reinforcing handwashing through consistent routines and positive reminders.

Activity 10

Supporting Middle Childhood Skill 2: Supporting Children to Manage Personal Hygiene Independently

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers understand how children aged 6–10 can begin managing more of their personal hygiene independently, including washing their hands and body, using their own towel, and keeping personal items clean.

Time: 40 minutes

Materials Needed

- Flipchart or board
- Markers
- Optional: pictures showing hygiene routines (washing hands, bathing, drying with a towel)

Steps

1. Start the discussion: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *What personal hygiene tasks can children aged 6–10 already do on their own?*
- *Which tasks still need supervision?*

Write examples on a flipchart.

2. Explore daily hygiene routines: Facilitate a short discussion about the key hygiene routines children should begin managing independently, such as:

- bathing or washing their body
- washing hands at key moments
- drying with their own towel
- keeping personal items clean
 - Personal items are objects owned and used by a person such as:
 - Hygiene items: toothbrush, soap, towel (deodorant for older children)
 - Clothing: shirts, shoes, underwear
 - Other: hairbrush, drinking cup or bottle

3. Discuss how to explain hygiene to children: Ask parents and caregivers how they explain germs and cleanliness to children. Share examples of simple explanations parents and caregivers can use (for example, “Washing helps remove germs that can make us sick”).

4. Practise guiding a child: In pairs, parents and caregivers practise explaining a simple hygiene routine to a child (for example, bathing or washing hands). Encourage them to use clear instructions, encouragement, and gentle reminders. Younger kids might like to help make a song to remember hygiene routines!

5. Plan routines and encouragement: Ask parents and caregivers to think about:

- when hygiene routines happen during the day
- how they remind children to complete them
- how they praise effort and independence.

Discuss how routines and positive reinforcement help children build confidence and responsibility.

Key messages:

- Parents should reduce supervision as children gain confidence and skills.
- Parents and caregivers should remind children not to share towels or personal hygiene items to help prevent the spread of germs and illness.

Activity 11

Supporting:

- **Middlechildhood Skill 4:** Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly
- **Adolescence Skill 4:** Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices

Purpose: This activity helps parents and caregivers explore how children in middle childhood and adolescence can begin taking responsibility for drinking water safely.

Time: 40 minutes

Materials Needed

- A clean cup
- A container representing safe drinking water (e.g., jug, bottle, or bucket with lid)
- A basin or water source for demonstrating cup washing (optional)

Steps

1. Start the discussion: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *Where do children usually get drinking water in your home?*
- *How do children know if the water is safe to drink?*

Discuss common water sources in the community and the importance of identifying safe drinking water sources.

2. Demonstrate safe water use: Using a cup and water container, demonstrate how parents and caregivers can show children:

- where safe drinking water comes from
- how to pour water into a clean cup without contaminating the container
- how to avoid dipping dirty cups or hands into stored drinking water.

3. Practise explaining the steps to a child: Invite parents and caregivers to work in pairs and practise explaining to a child:

- how to use their own clean cup
- why cups should be washed after drinking
- why hands should be clean before handling water.

Encourage simple and positive language.

4. Link water use to hygiene routines: Facilitate a discussion on how safe water practices connect to other hygiene behaviours, such as:

- washing hands before drinking
- keeping cups clean
- protecting drinking water from contamination.

5. Encourage responsibility and routines: Ask parents and caregivers how children can gradually take responsibility for:

- fetching drinking water
- using their own cup
- washing and storing their cup after use.

Discuss how reminders, supervision, and praise can help children develop these habits.

Key messages:

- Children aged 6–10 are able to fetch water, drink independently, and wash their own cups.
- Parents and caregivers play an important role in showing children where safe water comes from, how to use clean cups, and how to keep water containers hygienic.
- Safe water practices are closely linked to handwashing, sanitation, and family health
- Children learn best when parents and caregivers model behaviours and involve them in daily routines.
- With supervision, adolescents can help to make safe water through boiling or treating it.
- Adolescents are able to learn how clean water, hygiene and diseases are connected and what they can do to reduce risks of infection
- Parents and caregivers can encourage adolescents to take on more independent responsibility for water and hygiene in the home.

Activity 12

Supporting Middle childhood:

- **Skill 3:** Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely
- **Skill 5:** Helping with Keeping the House and Toilet Clean

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers reflect on how children in middle childhood can take part in keeping the home environment clean and healthy.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials Needed

- Flipchart or board
- Markers
- Optional: pictures of common household cleaning tasks or waste bins

Steps

1. Start the discussion: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *What cleaning tasks do children already help with at home?*
- *At what age do children begin helping?*
- Write examples on a flipchart.

2. Explore why cleanliness matters: Facilitate a short discussion about how keeping the home, toilet, and yard clean helps prevent germs, pests, and illness. Reinforce that children can learn these habits by participating in everyday household activities.

3. Identify age-appropriate tasks: Ask parents and caregivers to suggest simple tasks children aged 5–10 can safely help with, such as:

- Picking up rubbish
- Sweeping floors
- Wiping tables
- Putting waste in the correct bin
- Helping keep toilet areas tidy

Discuss which tasks require supervision.

4. Practise explaining the task to a child: In pairs, parents and caregivers practise explaining a cleaning task to a child using simple and encouraging language (for example, asking a child to help collect rubbish or wipe a table). Remind parents and caregivers to use positive language that does not scare children about germs.

5. Discuss how to make it positive and routine: Ask parents and caregivers:

- *How can we make cleaning feel positive rather than a punishment?*
- *What regular clean-up times could families create at home?*

Encourage ideas: games, songs, small chores, and praise children's efforts.

3.c. Adolescence (11–18 years)

The following section outlines key skills for parents and caregivers of adolescents aged 11–18 years. While adolescents should continue practising the core hygiene skills developed in early and middle childhood - such as handwashing, tooth brushing, safe water use, and personal hygiene - this section focuses on the additional support adolescents may need during puberty and increasing independence.

It provides guidance on how parents and caregivers can talk with adolescents about bodily changes, support healthy hygiene routines, and encourage responsibility for personal and household hygiene.

Skills in this section include:

- 1. Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies, and Hygiene Routines**
- 2. Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) about Menstruation**
- 3. Speaking with Boys about Grooming and Shaving**
- 4. Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices**

Note on caregiving for adolescents:

Families and caregiving roles take many forms, and not all adolescents live with both a mother and a father. In some households, one parent may be absent, or caregiving responsibilities may be shared with other family members or caregivers. For this reason, all parents and caregivers, regardless of gender, should feel informed and confident to speak with adolescents about their changing bodies, hygiene needs, and self-care during puberty. Open, supportive conversations from any trusted adult can help adolescents feel reassured, informed, and supported during this period of change.

Skill 1: Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies, and Hygiene Routines

Why It Matters

Puberty is a time of rapid physical, emotional, and social change. Adolescents begin to sweat more, develop body odour, and notice other changes in their bodies. Open communication about these changes helps adolescents understand that what they are experiencing is normal. This reduces anxiety and helps them adjust their hygiene routines, such as washing more frequently or using deodorant. (31) Parents and caregivers modelling good hygiene practices and discussing these changes in a supportive way encourages adolescents to take pride in their personal hygiene and feel confident about their bodies.

For additional guidance on having difficult conversations refer to:

- Chapter 3: Delivering Parenting Support in the Pacific on “Talking about Difficult and Sensitive Topics”.
- Module 2: Health and well-being:



- Middle Childhood:
 - Skill 3: Talking About Body Changes and Puberty in a Positive Way
- Adolescence:
 - Skill 2: Discussing Body Changes and Puberty
 - Skill 3: Supporting Positive Body Image



See Activity 13 at the end of this section for a facilitator-ed activity to do with parents and caregivers on speaking about puberty, changing bodies, and hygiene routines.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Normalise puberty and body changes:** Support parents and caregivers to explain that sweating, body odour, menstruation, voice changes, and other changes are normal and happen differently for everyone, using open, factual, age-appropriate language.
- **Model and reinforce hygiene practices:** Encourage parents and caregivers to model regular washing and appropriate use of hygiene products (e.g. soap, deodorant, menstrual hygiene materials where relevant) as adolescents’ bodies change.
- **Create non-judgemental, open communication:** Promote non-judgmental conversations where adolescents can ask questions about puberty, bodies, and hygiene without shame or fear.

- **Build self-care skills and confidence:** Support adolescents to take ownership of personal hygiene routines, with encouragement and praise for consistent effort and growing independence.
- **Link hygiene to well-being and dignity:** Connect hygiene habits to physical health, comfort, dignity, and social confidence, reinforcing positive body image during adolescence.

Social Media Messages

- A changing body is normal when you are growing up!
- Puberty? Yes, it happens to everyone. Stay clean, stay confident.
- Take good care of your body – you have it for life!

Skill 2: Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) about Menstruation

Why It Matters

Early and open conversations about menstruation are linked to improved well-being and school participation among adolescent girls. (32) Providing accurate information about menstruation before a girl's first period reduces fear and promotes confidence. Understanding how to manage menstrual hygiene, where to access menstrual products, and how to dispose of them safely supports good hygiene and helps prevent infections.

Although menstruation happens to girls, it is also important for boys to understand menstruation. Helping boys understand menstruation can reduce stigma, support respectful attitudes, and contribute to broader education about sexual and reproductive health. Learning accurate information about menstruation can also help boys show understanding and respect toward sisters, classmates, and friends.

For additional guidance on having difficult conversations refer to:

- **Chapter 3: Delivering Parenting Support in the Pacific on “Talking about Difficult and Sensitive Topics”.**

- **Module 2: Health and well-being:**



- **Middle Childhood:**
 - **Skill 3: Talking About Body Changes and Puberty in a Positive Way**
- **Adolescence:**
 - **Skill 2: Discussing Body Changes and Puberty**
 - **Skill 3: Supporting Positive Body Image**



See Activity 14 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on speaking about menstruation.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Share accurate, age-appropriate facts about menstruation:** Support parents and caregivers to explain what menstruation is, normalise it as a healthy part of growing up, correct myths, and answer questions openly with both girls and boys.
- **Teach safe menstrual hygiene practices:** Promote guidance on using, changing, washing, and safely disposing of menstrual materials. Discuss options for accessing appropriate products.
- **Create open, non-judgemental communication:** Encourage families to talk about menstruation without shame, creating a safe space for questions.
- **Support well-being and school participation:** Reinforce that good menstrual hygiene helps girls stay healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in school and daily activities.

- **Engage boys and men as allies:** Encourage fathers, brothers, and male caregivers to understand menstruation and support girls, helping reduce stigma and promote respectful attitudes.

Social Media Messages

- Your period is a normal biological function.
- Pads and hygiene: know how to use and dispose of them safely.
- It's normal to have questions - don't be afraid to talk to your parents or caregivers.

Skill 3: Speaking with Boys about Grooming and Shaving

Why It Matters

As boys grow facial hair, learning to shave safely is crucial to avoid injuries. Fathers and male caregivers supporting their sons strengthens father-son bonds and provides role modelling for hygiene. Teaching boys not to share razors reduces the risk of transmitting infections such as HIV or hepatitis¹. (33)



See Activity 15 at the end of this section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on speaking with boys about grooming and shaving.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Teach safe shaving and tool hygiene:** Support parents and caregivers to demonstrate safe razor use, proper cleaning and storage of tools, safe disposal of used blades (e.g., wrapping them securely or placing them in a puncture-resistant container before disposal).
- **Avoid sharing grooming tools:** Reinforce that razors and similar tools should never be shared to prevent infections.
- **Promote healthy grooming routines:** Encourage regular washing, deodorant use (where appropriate), and personal hygiene, linking grooming to health, comfort, and social confidence.
- **Create supportive parent/caregiver-adolescent communication:** Use grooming as a natural entry point for open, respectful conversations about body changes and self-care.
- **Build responsibility and independence:** Support adolescents to practise grooming safely with guidance, gradually taking responsibility for their own routines.

Social Media Messages

- My razor, my responsibility.
- Shave safely, stay healthy.
- Growing up is grooming time.

¹Eroglu C, Zivalioglu M, Esen S, Sunbul M, Leblebicioglu H. Detection of hepatitis B virus in used razor blades by PCR. *Hepat Mon.* 2010 Winter;10(1):22-5. Epub 2010 Mar 1. PMID: 22308121; PMCID: PMC3270340.

Skill 4: Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices

Why It Matters

In middle childhood, children begin learning how to safely collect and drink water on their own, including using clean cups and understanding where safe drinking water comes from. During adolescence, these early habits can be strengthened and expanded as young people take on greater responsibility for water safety within the household.

Adolescents are often able to support parents and caregivers with practical tasks that help keep drinking water safe, such as maintaining clean storage containers, helping prepare safe drinking water, or assisting with safe water collection. These responsibilities help adolescents understand how water, sanitation, and hygiene are connected to family and community health. With guidance and supervision, these experiences build practical life skills and reinforce habits that protect health across the life course.



See Activity 11 at the end of this previous section for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on supporting adolescents to manage safe household water practices.

Essential Building Blocks

- **Build on earlier water safety habits:** Reinforce safe water habits learned in middle childhood, such as using clean cups, drinking from safe sources, and washing containers regularly.
- **Promote responsible water collection and storage:** Involve adolescents in collecting water safely and keeping water storage containers clean and covered.
- **Support household water treatment:** Guide adolescents in helping prepare safe drinking water when needed, such as by boiling, filtering, or chlorinating water with supervision.
- **Contribute to maintaining safe water sources:** Encourage adolescents to help maintain safe water sources by checking containers, cleaning tanks, or supporting safe water treatment where appropriate.
- **Link water, hygiene, and health:** Help adolescents understand how safe water practices reduce the risk of illness, such as diarrhoeal disease, and how these practices connect with handwashing, food hygiene, and sanitation.
- **Encourage safe independence with supervision:** Supervise adolescents as they take on greater responsibility for water-related tasks, especially when boiling water or handling treatment products.

- **Strengthen lifelong responsibility:** Encourage adolescents to take pride in helping maintain safe water practices at home and to understand how these habits protect their own health and the well-being of their family and community.

Social Media Messages

- Safe water habits start young and grow stronger with responsibility.
- Teens do your part to help keep your family's water clean.
- Responsible water use protects everyone's health.



Activities for Facilitators

Activity 13

Supporting Adolescence Skill 1: Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies, and Hygiene Routines

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers practise having open and supportive conversations about puberty.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials Needed

- Scenario cards or written prompts (optional)
- Flipchart or board for noting discussion points
- Pens or markers

Steps

1. Set the tone: Facilitators explain that puberty is a normal stage of development and that bodies change at different times and in different ways. Emphasise that adolescents often have questions but may feel shy asking.

2. Model the activity: The facilitator demonstrates a short role-play with a volunteer, showing how a parent or caregiver might calmly talk with an adolescent about a change such as body odour, menstruation, voice changes, or the need for more frequent bathing.

3. Practise role-play: Participants work in pairs or small groups to practise short conversations between a parent/caregiver and an adolescent. One participant plays the parent/caregiver and the other plays the adolescent.

Facilitators may offer scenario options such as:

- A child asks why their body smells different after playing sports.
- A girl experiences her first period and asks what to do.
- A boy asks why his voice is changing or why he is growing hair.
- An adolescent resists bathing regularly or changing clothes.
- A child with a disability needs additional support managing hygiene routines.

Participants practise responding with calm, respectful language and reassurance.

4. Encourage cross-gender understanding: Facilitators encourage mothers and fathers to practise conversations with both sons and daughters. Highlight that boys can also learn about menstruation and that all adolescents benefit from understanding body changes.

5. Reflect and discuss: After the role-plays, facilitators guide a group discussion using questions such as:

- What felt easy or comfortable during the conversation?
- What felt difficult or awkward? Why did it feel difficult or awkward?
- What words or explanations helped make the conversation clearer or more supportive?
- How can parents and caregivers help adolescents feel comfortable asking questions about their bodies?
- How can families support adolescents who may need extra help with hygiene, including adolescents with disabilities?

6. Adapt for comfort and inclusion: Participants who prefer not to role-play can observe first or discuss how they might respond in similar situations. Facilitators may adapt scenarios to reflect common situations in the community.

Key messages:

- Puberty is a normal part of growing up
- Adolescents benefit from clear information, reassurance, and guidance from parents and caregivers.

Activity 14

Supporting Adolescence Skill 2: Speaking With Girls (and Boys!) About Menstruation

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers practise explaining menstruation in a respectful, supportive, and age-appropriate way. It highlights practical menstrual hygiene practices, including safe use, changing, washing (where relevant), and disposal of menstrual materials.

Note to Facilitators: Facilitators should create a safe and comfortable space where participants feel able to discuss menstruation openly. It should be emphasised that menstruation is a normal and healthy part of growing up, and that both female and male caregivers can play an important role in supporting adolescents.

Facilitators should also consider whether it may be more appropriate to hold discussions separately for male and female caregivers, depending on local cultural practices and social norms. Where possible, ensure that male caregivers also receive accurate information.

Encourage parents and caregivers to speak with their sons and daughters separately when needed. Remind them to respect girls' privacy while also helping boys understand what their sisters and friends may be experiencing.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials Needed

- Sample menstrual pads (disposable and/or reusable if available)
- Cloth or reusable menstrual materials (where culturally appropriate)
- Soap and water for demonstration (or visual explanation if water is not available)
- Covered waste container or bin for demonstrating safe disposal
- Visual aids or diagrams explaining menstruation (optional)

Steps

1. Introduce the topic: Facilitators explain that menstruation is a natural part of adolescence and that preparing girls before their first period helps them feel confident and safe. Participants briefly discuss what information girls should know before their first period.

2. Demonstrate menstrual hygiene practices: Using the materials provided, the facilitator demonstrates:

- how to correctly place and use a menstrual pad
- how often pads or cloths should be changed
- how reusable materials should be washed and dried safely (where relevant)
- how used menstrual materials should be wrapped and disposed of safely.

3. Practise and discussion: Parents and caregivers work in pairs or small groups to practise explaining menstrual hygiene steps using the materials. Facilitators encourage participants, including fathers, to ask questions and share concerns.

4. Discuss supporting girls with dignity: Facilitators lead a discussion on how parents and caregivers can support girls emotionally and practically during menstruation, including ensuring privacy, access to menstrual materials, and reassurance that menstruation is normal. Facilitators may guide the discussion with questions such as:

- How can parents and caregivers help girls feel less worried or embarrassed about their first period?
- What can families do to ensure girls have privacy and the materials they need to manage menstruation safely?
- What challenges might girls face managing menstruation at home or at school?
- How can parents and caregivers respond if a girl feels scared, embarrassed, or has an accident during her period?



Engage boys and male caregivers

- Facilitators to highlight the importance of helping boys understand menstruation so they can treat girls with respect and avoid teasing or stigma.
- Participants discuss simple ways parents and caregivers can explain menstruation to boys and encourage supportive attitudes within the family.

Activity 15

Supporting Adolescence Skill 3: Speaking with Boys about Grooming and Shaving

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers learn how to introduce shaving to adolescent boys in a supportive and practical way.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed

- Demonstration razor (preferably a new disposable razor or safety razor)
- Shaving cream, soap, or gel
- Bowl of water or access to running water
- Towel or cloth
- Mirror (optional but helpful for demonstration)
- Doll, mannequin head, or visual aid (optional for practice demonstration)
- Safe disposal container for used blades (if demonstrating blade replacement)

Steps

1. Start the conversation: Facilitators invite parents and caregivers to discuss the physical changes boys experience during adolescence, including the growth of facial hair. Emphasise that learning grooming skills is part of growing independence and personal care.

2. Encourage open communication: Facilitators discuss how parents and caregivers can create a supportive environment where boys feel comfortable asking questions about grooming, body changes, and personal care. Ask parents and caregivers when might be good times for this discussion with their adolescent boys. Explain that this is an opportunity to spend time together and reinforce that parents and caregivers are there if boys have any questions.

3. Demonstrate safe shaving practices: Using the demonstration materials, the facilitator shows the basic steps for safe shaving reminding parents and caregivers to keep razors and towels clean.

4. Practise explaining the steps: Parents and caregivers practise explaining or demonstrating the steps to a “child” using a doll, visual aid, or role-play with another participant. This helps parents and caregivers practise how they would guide their son calmly and clearly and use the time to bond together.

5. Discuss safety and hygiene: Facilitators highlight important safety messages:

- always using a clean razor
- never sharing razors with others
- storing grooming tools safely
- disposing of used blades carefully to avoid injury.

Annexes

1. Multi-sectoral Integration

This annex provides guidance on how clean water, hygiene, and sanitation messages can be reinforced across multiple sectors and community actors. Safe water use, good hygiene practices, and improved sanitation depend not only on household behaviours but also on coordinated efforts from sectors such as health, education, community development, and local governance. Working across these sectors helps ensure that parents and caregivers receive consistent information and support to adopt and maintain healthy practices.

In addition to in-person services, digital communication platforms such as SMS, WhatsApp, and Facebook can be used to reinforce key parenting and hygiene messages at scale by providing reminders, practical tips, and prompts that encourage parents and caregivers to practice safe water use, handwashing, sanitation, and household hygiene.

The table below shows possible entry points for integrating water, hygiene, and sanitation guidance across sectors. It identifies the actors involved, the platforms they use to reach families, and practical ways to coordinate. It also shows which parenting skills are reinforced at different ages, highlighting how multiple sectors can support behaviours that protect children’s health and well-being.

Programme implementers can use this annex to identify opportunities for collaboration, align messages across services, and ensure parents and caregivers receive consistent guidance on clean water, hygiene, and sanitation at home and in their communities.

Table M4.1: Multi-Sectoral Integration for Clean Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

Sector / Actors	Delivery Platform	Coordination Tips for Implementers (Pacific Context) to Support Parents and Caregivers	Parenting Skills Reinforced (Across Ages)
Health Services & Health Promotion Teams	Clinics, well-child visits, immunisation days, post-natal classes, outreach campaigns	Integrate hygiene promotion into routine child health and outreach services; align messaging with schools and WASH initiatives; identify campaign schedules and reinforce consistent hygiene	Handwashing at key times; safe water use and storage; sun-drying clothes; bathing routines; toilet training and safe disposal; oral hygiene; puberty

		guidance in parenting sessions	and hygiene discussions
Schools, ECD Centres & Teachers	Classrooms, PTAs, school hygiene classes, WASH in Schools activities, school feeding programmes	Coordinate hygiene messages between school and home; use take-home materials to reinforce routines; align puberty, positive body image messaging and hygiene education with parenting sessions; encourage parent/caregiver participation in WASH activities	Handwashing routines; toilet training; water safety; oral hygiene; managing personal hygiene independently; puberty and menstruation discussions; safe cooking hygiene
Community Groups & Local Leaders	Community gatherings, clean-up days, sanitation campaigns, village meetings	Link hygiene promotion to community events and national celebrations; reinforce supervision and safe disposal norms; coordinate with health and education actors to maintain consistent messaging	Community clean-up participation; safe waste disposal; handwashing; maintaining clean household spaces; involving children in caring for shared spaces
Faith-Based Organisations & Churches	Church gatherings, marriage classes, community discussions	Promote hygiene as part of caring for children and families; reinforce water safety and cleanliness during gatherings; align discussions with health and school messaging	Positive hygiene modelling; safe water storage; bathing routines; puberty hygiene discussions; community sanitation norms
WASH & Water/Sanitation Programmes	School WASH programmes, community	Coordinate hygiene messaging across education, health and	Safe water use; handwashing; sanitation and

	water campaigns, hygiene promotion sessions	community sectors; use awareness days and demonstrations to reinforce behaviour change; integrate hygiene topics into parenting sessions	toilet training; maintaining clean environments; disease prevention through hygiene
Youth Groups & Peer Educators	Youth sessions, SRH classes, peer-led discussions	Reinforce puberty and hygiene education; address misconceptions; align adolescent messaging with parent/caregiver guidance; promote responsible water and sanitation practices	Puberty hygiene; menstruation management; grooming and shaving; personal hygiene independence; tackling misinformation
WASH in Schools	School settings and classrooms	Reinforce messages children receive at home around importance of keeping places clean	Safe water use; handwashing; sanitation and toilet training; maintaining clean environments

2. Programmes per skill

This annex highlights programmes, tools, and resources that support the clean water, hygiene, and sanitation skills presented in this module. Many organisations and initiatives have developed materials that address similar topics related to safe water use, hygiene practices, sanitation, and healthy household environments.

The table below provides examples of programmes and resources linked to the skills in this module. Facilitators and programme implementers can use these materials to learn more, access additional guidance, and find practical tools or activities to support parents and caregivers. Where links are not available, programme managers and facilitators are encouraged to reach out to the relevant organisation directly to get more information.

These resources can help strengthen programme delivery by reinforcing consistent messages and providing examples of effective ways to promote healthy behaviours across the life course.

Table M4.2: Programmes for Clean Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Skills

Programme and Guidance	Skill
<p>Name: Samoan Community Clean up initiatives</p> <p>Organisation: Government of Samoa and Samoa Recycling & Waste Management Association (SRWMA)</p> <p>Country or Countries: Samoa</p> <p>Short description or link:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nationwide Clean-Ups: Large-scale clean-up events happen before major events such as the Samoa 2019 Pacific Games, where thousands participated in nation-wide clean-ups to present their best to the world. 2. Recycling Competitions: The Samoa Recycling & Waste Management Association (SRWMA) organises recycling competitions, engaging students in sorting and cleaning recyclables. 	<p>Best Practices Across the Life Course</p> <p>Skill 4: Promote and Maintain Clean Household Spaces</p>
<p>Name: National school health and oral health campaigns</p> <p>Organisations: Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), Colgate-Palmolive, Fiji National University (FNU).</p> <p>Country or Countries: Fiji</p> <p>Short description or link:</p> <p>Fiji national school health and oral health campaigns focused on early prevention and daily habits. Initiatives include school toothbrushing programs with fluoride rinses, oral health education for students/parents, and comprehensive screenings aimed at reducing NCDs.</p>	<p>Best Practices Across the Life Course</p> <p>Skill 5: Encourage Teeth Brushing Twice a Day</p>

<p>Name: Bright Smiles, Bright Futures Organisations: Colgate-Palmolive, Year: Introduced in Fiji in 1993 Country or Countries: Fiji and Pacific wide Short description or link: The <u>programme</u> focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Proper Brushing Technique:</u> Learning to brush all tooth surfaces • <u>Frequency and Routine:</u> Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpastes, specifically after breakfast and before bedtime • <u>Flossing:</u> Techniques for cleaning between teeth where a toothbrush cannot reaches • <u>Preventative Care Knowledge:</u> Understanding the importance of regular dental check-ups (at least every 6 months) • <u>Tongue Hygiene:</u> Brushing the tongue to remove bacteria 	<p>Best Practices Across the Life Course Skill 5: Encourage Teeth Brushing Twice a Day</p>
<p>Name: Live and Learn: Environmental Education Organisation: Live and Learn Year: 1999 Country or Countries: Pacific Wide Short description or link:</p> <p><u>TIMRAN:</u> Resource with a cartoon character to encourage hygiene and sanitation</p> <p><u>Putting Your Waste in the Right Place Flipchart</u></p> <p><u>Case study: More than just saving water in Kiribati</u></p> <p><u>River Care – Why Water? A Teaching and Learning Resource for Vanuatu</u></p> <p><u>Improving Menstrual Health: A Toolkit for Community Facilitators in Solomon Islands</u></p> <p><u>Menstrual Health Day – It’s Time For Action</u></p> <p><u>Men and boys advocate for menstruation management in their school</u></p>	<p>Best Practices Across the Life Course Skill 1: Model Positive Hygiene Practices</p> <p>Best Practices Across the Life Course Skill 5: Encourage Teeth Brushing Twice a Day</p> <p>Early Childhood Skill 1: Encourage Hand washing with Soap at Key Times (before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet or cleaning a nappy/diaper)</p> <p>Early Childhood Skill 2: Gentle Toilet Training and Safe Disposal Practices</p> <p>Early Childhood Skill 3: Create a Regular Bathing and Cleaning Routine</p> <p>Middle Childhood Skill 3: Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely</p> <p>Middle Childhood Skill 4: Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly</p>

<p><u>Reducing menstruation stigma in the Solomon Islands</u></p> <p><u>WASH Preschool guide</u></p>	<p>Adolescence Skill 2: Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) about Menstruation</p>
<p>Name: WASH in Schools (WinS) Organisation: UNICEF Country or Countries: Pacific Wide Short description or link: promote safe drinking water, toilets, and handwashing facilities to improve health, learning, and gender equality, often employing a "<u>3 Star Approach</u>". Key initiatives include improving infrastructure, daily hygiene routines, and menstrual health education</p>	<p>Adolescence Skill 4: Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices</p> <p>Best Practices Across the Life Course Skill 2: Use Safe Water and Water Storage Containers</p> <p>Middle Childhood Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing at Key Times</p> <p>Middle Childhood Skill 4: Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly</p> <p>Middle Childhood Skill 5: Helping with Keeping the House and Toilet Clean</p> <p>Adolescence Skill 4: Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices</p>
<p>Name: Family Life Education Organisation: UNFPA Year: 2024 Country or Countries: Pacific Wide Short description or link:The programme includes content on puberty, body changes and hygiene alongside broader sexual and reproductive health. <u>FLE Micronesia</u> and <u>FLE Samoa</u></p>	<p>Adolescence Skill 1: Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies, and Hygiene routines</p> <p>Adolescence Skill 2: Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) about Menstruation</p>
<p>Name: Turning Teen Organisation: Turning Teen Country: United States Short Description or link Resources: A <u>specialized program</u> founded by pediatricians that provides puberty education and support for children aged 8-14, helping families navigate physical and emotional changes.</p>	<p>Adolescence Skill 1: Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies, and Hygiene Routines</p> <p>Adolescence Skill 2: Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) about Menstruation</p> <p>Adolescence Skill 3: Speaking with Boys about Grooming and Shaving</p>

3. Facilitator Checklists

This checklist is designed to support facilitators in preparing for and delivering the clean water, hygiene, and sanitation content of the Pacific Parenting Toolkit effectively. It highlights key steps to consider before, during, and after each session to ensure that activities are well organised, inclusive, and supportive for parents and caregivers.

The checklist helps facilitators:

- prepare materials and plan activities in advance
- create a safe and respectful learning environment for participants
- guide discussions and practical demonstrations effectively
- reinforce key parenting messages related to safe water use, hygiene, and sanitation practices
- reflect on what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

Facilitators can use this checklist as a practical reminder during session preparation and delivery, helping maintain consistent quality across sessions and supporting positive learning experiences for parents and caregivers.

Table M4.3: Facilitator Checklist for Clean Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

Best Practices Across the Life Course

Skill 1: Model Positive Hygiene Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model proper handwashing with soap at key times (e.g., before meals, after toileting, after handling animals) during sessions and encourage parents and caregivers to establish these routines at home.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate discussion on why hygiene is important for health, dignity, and daily functioning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage parents and caregivers to visibly model bathing, grooming, and personal hygiene behaviours for children and adolescents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforce praising and encouraging children when they practise hygiene independently.
Skill 2: Use Safe Water and Water Storage Containers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide guidance on identifying safe water sources and proper household water treatment where necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support parents and caregivers in storing drinking water in clean, covered containers.

- Facilitate problem-solving around regular cleaning of water containers and safe placement away from contamination sources (e.g., latrines, drains).

- Teach strategies for guiding children to handle water safely and hygienically.

Skill 3: Sun-dry Clothes and Laundry

- Promote regular washing of clothes, bedding, and household linens.

- Encourage drying clothes in direct sunlight when possible and storing them in clean, dry spaces.

- Facilitate age-appropriate involvement of children in laundry tasks and explain the health benefits of sun-drying (reducing bacteria, fungi, and insects).

Skill 4: Promote and Maintain Clean Household Spaces

- Guide parents and caregivers in maintaining clean, functional household environments, including floors, surfaces, and latrines.

- Encourage age-appropriate involvement of children in household cleaning tasks.

- Promote participation in community clean-up campaigns and collective sanitation efforts.

- Facilitate discussion on safe waste disposal practices and the health benefits of clean homes and communities.

Skill 5: Encourage Teeth Brushing Twice a Day

- Demonstrate proper toothbrushing techniques and encourage brushing in the morning and before bedtime.

- Provide guidance on selecting age-appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste.

- Reinforce supervision of young children until they can brush effectively on their own.

- Encourage integrating toothbrushing into predictable daily routines, especially after meals when possible.

Early Childhood (0–5 years)

Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing with Soap at Key Times (before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet or cleaning a nappy/diaper)

- Demonstrate proper handwashing with soap at critical times (before preparing food, before eating, after toilet use, after cleaning a child or changing nappies/diapers).
- Guide parents and caregivers in modelling handwashing consistently and inviting young children to practise alongside them.
- Facilitate discussion on establishing predictable handwashing routines in the home.
- Reinforce the importance of praising children when they remember to wash their hands independently.

Skill 2: Gentle Toilet Training and Safe Disposal Practices

- Support parents and caregivers in recognising signs of readiness for toilet training and in using patient, encouraging approaches.
- Model and promote washing hands together after potty or toilet use.
- Provide guidance on safe disposal of nappies/diapers and maintaining clean, hygienic toilet areas.
- Emphasise that accidents are a normal part of learning and encourage positive reinforcement rather than punishment.

Skill 3: Create a Regular Bathing and Cleaning Routine

- Guide parents and caregivers in establishing consistent bathing routines, including washing hands, face, and body.
- Reinforce regular care of hair, nails, and other hygiene needs.
- Encourage gradual involvement of children in simple self-care steps as they grow.
- Promote using bath time as an opportunity to model hygiene practices and provide praise and encouragement.

Middle Childhood (6–10 years)

Skill 1: Encourage Handwashing at Key Times

- Reinforce handwashing with soap as a non-negotiable first step before cooking or handling food.
- Guide parents and caregivers in linking handwashing before cooking to other daily hygiene habits (e.g., after toilet use, before eating).
- Support parents and caregivers in explaining, in simple and age-appropriate terms, how handwashing prevents the spread of germs and keeps food safe.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to build children's independence by using reminders, routines, and praise to strengthen responsibility.

Skill 2: Supporting Children to Manage Personal Hygiene Independently

- Guide parents and caregivers in encouraging children to bathe, wash hair, and brush teeth with increasing independence.
- Teach parents and caregivers to explain the importance of not sharing towels or personal hygiene items.
- Reinforce the use of praise and encouragement to build consistent hygiene habits.

Skill 3: Teaching Children to Care for Shared Spaces and Dispose of Waste Safely

- Encourage parents and caregivers to involve children in age-appropriate cleaning of shared household spaces (e.g., floors, tables, bathrooms).
- Facilitate discussion on proper waste disposal practices and maintaining tidy environments.
- Promote family participation in community clean-up activities to strengthen responsibility and collective well-being.

Skill 4: Teaching Children to Use Water Safely and Responsibly

- Support parents and caregivers in teaching children about safe drinking water sources and why they matter.
- Guide parents and caregivers in demonstrating the use of clean cups and

regular washing of water containers.

- Reinforce careful and hygienic water handling practices, including handwashing after handling shared water sources.

Skill 5: Helping with Keeping the House and Toilet Clean

- Encourage parents and caregivers to involve children in cleaning shared spaces and toilets.
- Show parents and caregivers how to teach proper waste disposal and tidy habits.
- Guide parents and caregivers to support children’s participation in community clean-up activities.
- Help parents and caregivers reinforce that clean spaces protect family and community health.

Adolescence (11 –18 years)

Skill 1: Speaking about Puberty, Changing Bodies and Hygiene Routines

- Guide parents and caregivers in explaining normal physical changes during puberty, including sweating, body odour, and growth patterns.
- Support parents and caregivers in reassuring adolescents that these changes are normal and occur at different times for different individuals.
- Facilitate discussion on adapting hygiene routines during puberty (e.g., more frequent bathing, use of deodorant, changing clothes regularly).
- Model openness and confidence in discussing body changes to reduce shame or embarrassment.

Skill 2: Speaking with Girls (and Boys!) About Menstruation

- Provide accurate, age-appropriate information about menstruation as a normal part of development.
- Guide parents and caregivers in teaching safe menstrual hygiene management, including correct use and disposal of sanitary products.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to ensure girls know how to access

menstrual products and private, safe sanitation facilities.

- Support parents and caregivers in responding openly to questions and offering reassurance, including to girls with disabilities.
- Promote educating boys about menstruation to foster respect, reduce stigma, and encourage supportive attitudes.

Skill 3: Speaking with Boys About Grooming and Shaving

- Demonstrate or explain safe shaving practices and the importance of using personal razors.
- Provide information on infection risks associated with sharing razors (e.g., blood-borne infections).
- Encourage regular grooming practices as part of overall hygiene routines.
- Promote positive role modelling by fathers or male caregivers where appropriate.

Skill 4: Supporting Adolescents to Manage Safe Household Water Practices

- Demonstrate safe water handling and storage by showing parents and caregivers how adolescents can use clean containers, cover water, and avoid contamination.
- Explain simple water treatment methods, such as boiling, filtering, or chlorination practices for household use.
- Engage parents and caregivers in supporting adolescents by discussing strategies to motivate adolescents to consistently practice safe water habits.
- Encourage household monitoring and routines: help parents and caregivers set up reminders, checklists, or simple audits for safe water management at home.

4. Additional Information: How do Children Catch Diarrhoea?

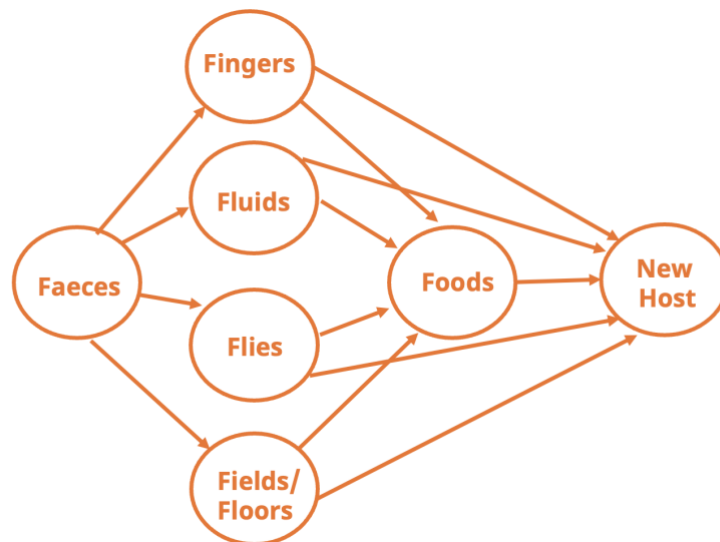


Figure 1. F-Diagram on main routes by which pathogens move from faeces to a new host. Adapted from: Ijaz MK, Rubino J. Impact of infectious diseases on cognitive development in childhood and beyond: potential mitigational role of hygiene. (34)

Diarrhoeal diseases are primarily spread through faecal contamination, and the F-diagram (See Figure 1) illustrates the main routes by which pathogens move from faeces to a new host. Microbes from faeces can travel through fluids (water), fingers, flies, fields/floors, and food, eventually reaching a child and causing infection. (27, 35) For example, contaminated water from a well or unwashed hands after using the toilet can transfer microbes onto food or directly into a child's mouth, leading to diarrhoea and perpetuating the cycle of infection.

Safe disposal of faeces is critical to prevent diarrhoeal infections. Both adult and child stools should ideally be disposed of in toilets or latrines. Where toilets are unavailable, stools should be buried or carried away from areas where children play or near water sources and then covered with earth. (35) Teaching toddlers to use potties can also help reduce faecal contamination in the home environment.

Animal faeces, including those from pigs, cows, and chickens, can also carry diarrhoeal microbes and should be kept away from homes and play areas. (27) By ensuring safe stool disposal and reducing contact with faecal matter, families can significantly lower the risk of diarrhoeal disease in children.

