



Division of Environmental Health

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MEMORANDUM

From: Deborah Harris, RN, Public Health Nursing Consultant,
Children's Environmental Health Branch

Through: Ed Norman, Program Manager
Children's Environmental Health Branch

Subject: Sanitizing Feeding Tubes And Hand Washing For Special Needs Children In Child Care Centers

Several local environmental health specialists have requested information on sanitizing procedures for feeding tubes used by children with special needs in child care centers. The following recommendations are provided after consultation with Dale Newton, MD, Professor of Pediatrics at East Carolina University.

Feeding tubes do not need to be sanitized in the same way as other utensils or kitchen equipment. A child with a feeding tube is under the direct medical care of a physician and the physician's order should indicate how often the feeding tube can be used or needs to be changed. If a nasopharyngeal tube (NG) or an oropharyngeal tube (OG) is used for a feeding or medication, flushing the tube with water before and after each feeding is sufficient. If either feeding tube requires cleaning, soap and water is all that is necessary. Gastrointestinal tubes (G-tubes) are surgically placed and are not changed at all unless they malfunction, but require the same flushing as the other tubes before and after a feeding or medication. If the physician's orders do not indicate how often the feeding tube can be used or needs to be changed, then the manufacturer's instructions should be followed. Medical policies and procedures regarding the placement and care of feeding tubes should be kept and made available at the child care center.

Hand washing is a critical means of preventing the spread of disease in the child care setting. Washing a child's hand who has hand contractures can be challenging, but it is good standard practice to attempt cleaning the child's hands by wiping them with an antibacterial wipe with special emphasis on the drying process.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by phone at (252) 824-2911 or by email at Deborah.Harris@ncmail.net.