

**Good hygiene
and clean
hands keep
young children
healthy and
strong**



Why

do good hygiene and clean hands keep young children healthy and strong?

Infants and young children are less likely to get sick with good hygiene practices in food handling and feeding

- Washing caregivers' and children's hands with soap before preparing and eating foods is one of the most important ways of preventing germs from getting into food and avoiding diarrhoea in young children.
- Food served immediately after cooking and stored safely reduces the risk of germs getting into food and young children getting diarrhoea, a major cause of death of children.

Clean hands and utensils, and safe disposal of stools prevent food contamination and infections

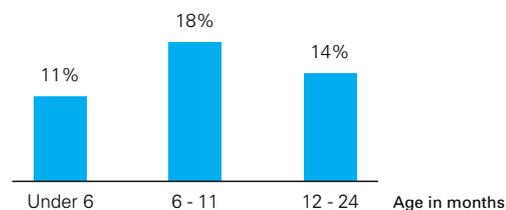
- Using clean utensils and crockery will stop germs from getting into food; feeding bottles, which are difficult to keep clean, should be completely avoided.
- Unclean hands and unsafe disposal of stools lead to germs and worms entering the body of young children, causing diarrhoea and other infections and leading to growth failure and poor development.

Where are we today?

In India, one infant in five aged 6 to 12 months suffers from diarrhoea at any one point. Only 21 per cent of mothers report disposing child's stools safely, which is critical in preventing disease from spreading. In rural areas, 51 per cent of children's

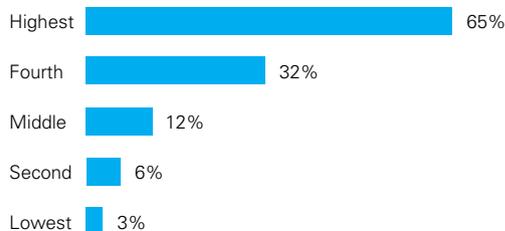
stools are left in the open compared to 25 per cent in the urban areas. This indicates the urgent need for safe hygiene, sanitation, and food and feeding practices when infants start receiving complementary foods.

Children under two with diarrhoea* (%)



* in the two weeks preceding the survey

Mothers who dispose their child's stools safely by household wealth quintile (%)



Source: NFHS-3, 2016

Infants aged 6 to 12 months old are more likely to suffer from diarrhoea than any other age group as this is the time period when they start eating complementary foods, which are not always handled in a safe and clean manner.

How to keep all children healthy through clean hands and good hygiene and sanitation practices?

Raise awareness, expand outreach

- Raise awareness on the importance of adequate hygiene and sanitation practices for child survival, growth and development.
- Expand outreach through programmes that engage communities on issues related to sanitation, safe food handling and hand washing, especially in the context of child feeding.

Improve programmes and infrastructure, scale up interventions

- Harmonize communications strategies across departments and programmes to promote safe hygiene, sanitation and feeding practices for infants and young children.
- Improve adoption of safe drinking water and sanitation practices with emphasis on improving community norms and individual practices.
- Improve the capacity of community frontline workers to counsel and support mothers and families on how to improve feeding, hygiene and sanitation practices for infants and young children.