

Start 'Em Out Right



Melanie, the director of a day-care facility, read an article in the morning paper about an *E. coli* outbreak at another day-care center across town. She was especially concerned to read that the outbreak was caused by one of the volunteer parents who had changed a soiled diaper and then helped make the afternoon snack for the children.

Melanie and her staff are fully committed to the safety of the children in their care. She is determined to ensure that good personal hygiene is practiced not only by all the adult teachers and caretakers, but also by the children.

In just two weeks she will be starting a new program for the children called “Kid’s Kitchen.” Children ages four and up will be able to help prepare the daily snack. She felt this was the ideal place to start her personal hygiene program.

Melanie decided to observe the staff and the children in preparation for the new program. She noted that one staffer, after changing a soiled baby diaper, wiped the changing table with a paper towel. She then washed her hands. This staffer was also scheduled to help the children prepare the afternoon snack. In the restroom, Melanie observed that the children, often in a hurry to get back to playing, forgot to wash their hands after using the toilet unless reminded to do so. She also noticed that a few of the younger children had difficulty reaching the soap, although they could reach the sink. This situation was not helped by the fact that the soap in one of the soap dispensers was low, while the other dispenser was empty.

Realizing that both staff and children come in contact with each other throughout the day, she implemented two different personal hygiene programs: one for teachers and caretakers and one for children.

- ① What things would you change or fix in this operation?
- ② What would you include when designing the personal hygiene programs?
- ③ How would you introduce this to the staff and to the children?

Start 'Em Out Right Answers

- ① Here is what should be changed in the operation.
 - Assign someone to check and refill soap dispensers regularly.
 - Lower the soap dispensers so children can reach them.
 - Make sure that cleaning and sanitizing supplies are available to staffers and volunteers who use the changing tables.
- ② The personal hygiene programs should include the following.
 - The personal hygiene program for adults should include information on how and when to wash hands. The necessity of washing hands after diaper changing should be stressed.
 - The personal hygiene program for children should include information on how and when to wash hands. The necessity of washing hands after using the toilet should be stressed.
- ③ The staff and the children could be introduced to the programs in these ways.
 - New employees and volunteers should attend a mandatory session on personal hygiene.
 - Adult employees and volunteers should attend training and retraining on an ongoing basis.
 - Personal hygiene for the children should be included in their regular lesson time. Games and prizes can make the training more fun. A handwashing competition might also encourage increased participation.