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Canadian Institute of Child Health
Institut canadien de la santé infantile

News Release

Handwashing Awareness Campaign for Canadian Children Keeping Kids Healthy!

OTTAWA, September 23, 2009 - Canadian children must be taught how and when to wash their hands. This is the main message of an awareness campaign that has seen mounting interest from provincial, regional and non-governmental organizations since it was launched in May this year.

The campaign, aimed at preschool children and educators, is entitled "*William, Won't You Wash Your Hands?*". It consists of an innovative resource kit that chronicles the adventures of a rascally preschooler named William who is resistant to washing his hands.

The Canadian Institute of Child Health (CIH) developed the resource kit in consultation with experts in infectious diseases, early childhood education and care, public health and pediatric medicine. The kit provides a comprehensive set of resources on handwashing and infection control for early learning and care settings.

"Teaching children how to wash their hands is central to preventing many childhood illnesses," said Dr. Robin Walker, CIH Advisor and Vice President of Medicine of IWK Health Centre in Halifax. "Research has shown that having children wash their hands can decrease the spread of infection within early learning and care programs, which has a positive impact on children, program staff and families."

CIH has worked in partnership with the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association (CCSPA), Reckitt Benckiser, and the Public Health Agency of Canada to print and distribute the kit, free of charge, to approximately 12,000 early learning and care programs, family resource centres and public health units in Canada, making this resource available to approximately 265,000 children across Canada and their families. To date, more than 1,800 additional kits have also been ordered.

The kit is comprised of five components that come together neatly in a kit envelope:

- an illustrated storybook;
- 2 posters which can be hung in early learning centres - one on the steps involved in handwashing and the other reminds children when to wash their hands;
- 2 resource sheets for educators that include information on infection control; and
- a resource booklet that provides educators with an assortment of activities, songs and games that all teach handwashing.

“The kit includes everything an educator needs to develop a comprehensive handwashing curriculum for young children,” said Shannon Coombs, CCSPA President. “The resource material provides a great foundation for educators on the importance of good hygiene and the storybook, posters and game ideas make handwashing fun.”

CICH and CCSPA encourage parents, early childhood educators and caregivers to teach children the steps to good handwashing:

1. Wet your hands under warm running water.
2. Put soap on your wet hands.
3. Rub soap all over the front and back of your hands, the tips of your fingers and your nails for 15 – 20 seconds. (About the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday to You!)
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands well with a clean towel.
6. Turn off taps with the towel.

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CICH

The Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH) is the only national charitable organization dedicated solely to improving the health of children and youth in Canada. Founded in 1977, CICH has a successful history of developing and implementing initiatives to increase public understanding and awareness of child health issues through health promotion programs, child health monitoring, education and advocacy. **To purchase a kit**, please go to: <http://www.cich.ca/PDFFiles/OrderForms/Order%20William%20English.pdf> or contact Janice Sonnen, Executive Director, CICH at 613-232-8838, ext. 223.

CCSPA

CCSPA is a national trade association that represents 45 member companies across Canada, collectively a \$20 billion industry directly employing 12,000 people in over 100 facilities. Our companies manufacture, process, package and distribute consumer, industrial and institutional specialty products such as soaps and detergents, pest control products, aerosols, hard surface disinfectants, deodorizers and automotive chemicals. **For more information**, please go to: <http://www.healthycleaning101.org> or contact Shannon Coombs, President, CCSPA at 613-232-6616, ext. 18.