

Rufus Handwashing Campaign

Dear Colleague,

I would like to make you aware that **safefood** will launch the next phase of their Rufus, the handwashing hero programme on 2 September. It aims to make learning handwashing habits engaging and fun for pre-school children and Junior Infants.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has elevated the importance of good handwashing practices with the public, to help reduce the spread of the virus. Teaching children good handwashing habits has become even more important than ever.

The aim of the programme is to communicate the importance of correct and regular handwashing, emphasising that children need to clean their hands for at least 20 seconds, and to dry their hands thoroughly. The programme also highlights the key occasions when hands should be washed. These include:

- when we enter the home
- before we eat
- after play/pets
- after using the toilet

A specific handwashing pack has been developed with input from educational professionals to teach children about handwashing through story, song and behavioural feedback. This is a unique resource suitable for children aged between 3 – 6 years of age, as it does not require literacy skills. Originally developed and distributed to Early Learning and Care settings, this has been extended to include all primary schools, specifically for Junior Infant classes. Rufus will be familiar to those children from their pre-school year. The resource also supports the Social, Personal and Health Education element of the curriculum.

As Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare professionals, you and your staff can play a key role in teaching good handwashing and preventing the spread of Covid-19 among the children in your care.

Each pack contains the following materials:

- **Staff poster** to help remind everyone just how important handwashing is, especially now.
- **Staff leaflet** to explain how to get the most out of using Rufus handwashing resources.
- **Waterproof handwashing posters** to be placed at sinks in your toilets, as a prompt and learning tool for children.
- **Storybook** using fun illustrations and rhyme to teach children how and when to wash their hands.

- **Stickers** to get children excited and reward them for good handwashing.

The pack also includes additional waterproof sink posters for children to take home to their parents to encourage the continuity of good handwashing habits at home.

Posters and additional resources, including videos and downloadable activities are available on the **safefood** web site – www.safefood.net/handwashing

This includes a downloadable and readable version of the storybook suitable for both desktop and tablet.

I would grateful if you would share this information with the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare services in your area.