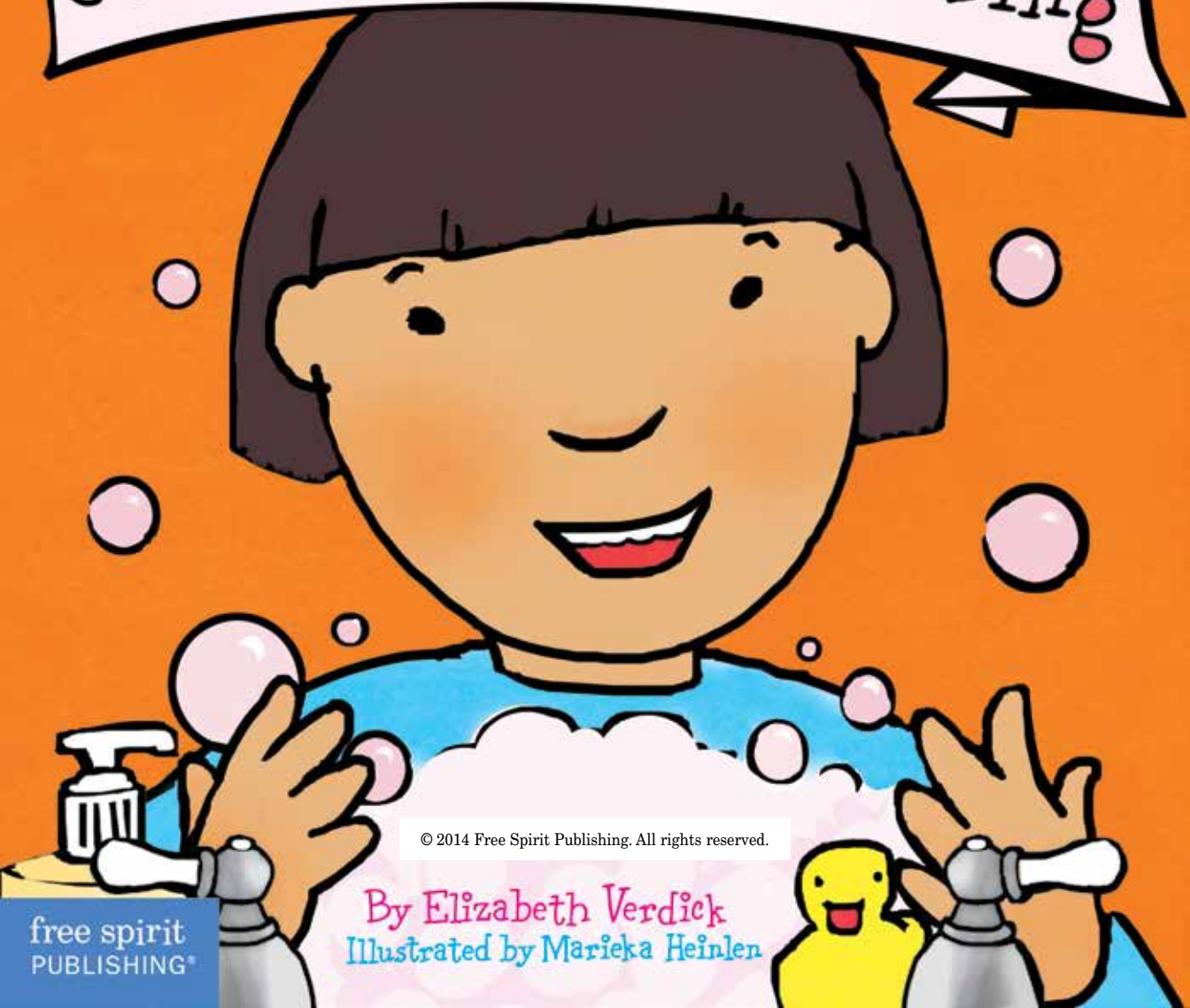


Germs Are Not for Sharing



© 2014 Free Spirit Publishing. All rights reserved.

By Elizabeth Verdick
Illustrated by Marieka Heinlen

free spirit
PUBLISHING®

Achoo! Achoo!
What do you need to do?



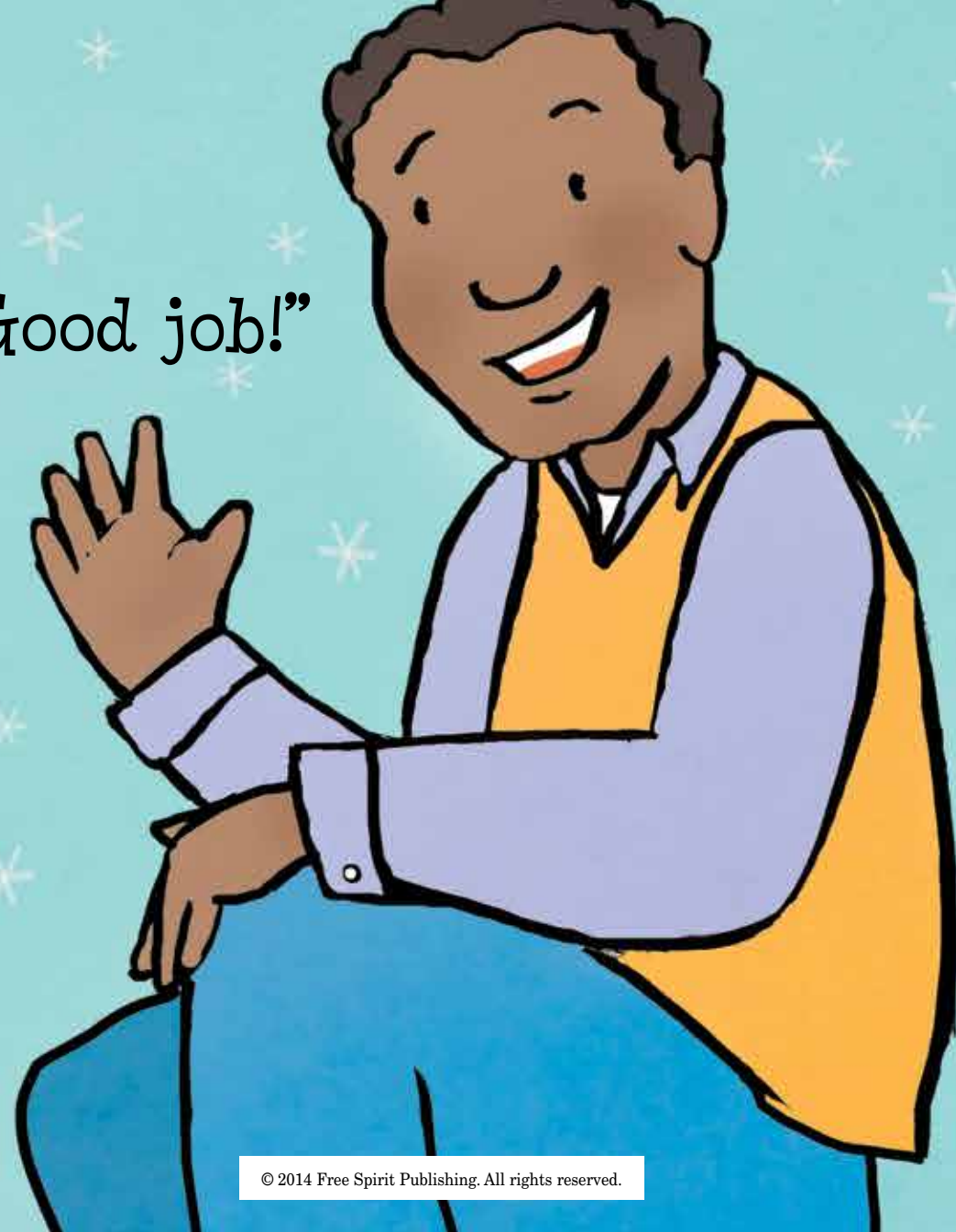
Say, “Tissue, please!”
(Or reach for one yourself.)



Blow. Wipe. And toss.



“Good job!”



Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Achoo! Cough! Uh-oh! Yuck! No one ever said taking care of toddlers was easy or neat. Sneezes, coughs, runny noses, spills, and messes are a fact of everyday life with young children, so it's never too early to teach them about germs and staying clean and healthy.

Spreading the Word About Not Spreading Germs

During cold and flu season, toddlers are even more vulnerable to illness. Colds and flu can be spread by the hands or transmitted via air (when people sneeze or cough, for example). It's difficult to prevent toddlers from putting their hands in their mouth or accidentally sneezing on each other, but there *are* some things you can do to cut down on the spread of germs:

- **Talk about “Germs are not for sharing.”** Young children typically hear a lot about the importance of sharing their toys and belongings. So it may come as a surprise when you say that germs are not for sharing. Let the children know that even though we can't see germs, we know they're there because they can make us sick. Talk about how germs come from our bodies or can be found on different surfaces such as tables, toilets, and the floor. Encourage children not to share their cups, spoons, juice boxes, toothbrushes, or food, especially if they're sick. And when it comes to kisses—what can you say? During cold and flu season, suggest hugs instead. Or, show the children how fun it can be to blow kisses to each other (from a distance, of course!).
- **Keep hands clean.** Experts agree that one of the best ways to cut down on the spread of germs is hand washing—and that means for children *and* adults. Wash your hands before eating or preparing food, after blowing your nose (or sneezing or coughing), after contact with anyone who's ill, after changing diapers, and after using the bathroom or helping a child on the potty. When soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand gel or wipe to clean hands.

- **Supervise hand washing.** At around age two, children are ready to learn how to wash their hands by themselves but still need help getting the water to the right temperature, using soap, making lots of bubbles, rinsing well, and drying their hands afterward. Show the children how to wash their palms, fingers, and the tops of their hands, as well as how to use liquid and bar soaps. Encourage them to sing a short song as they wash so they stay at the sink long enough. (Recommended time for washing hands is at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Have children sing the Alphabet Song, or sing Happy Birthday twice.)
- **Teach “Blow, wipe, and toss.”** Most toddlers need to be taught how to use a tissue. Show them how to blow their nose *through* their nose and not their mouth (that takes some practice!), how to wipe a runny nose, and how to throw their used tissues in the garbage afterward. Similarly, when it comes to coughs and sneezes, teach little ones to **“Cover it up.”** Medical professionals recommend that people sneeze or cough into their shoulder or the crook of their elbow, instead of into their hands. Demonstrate how to do this, and explain why covering your face with your sleeve can cut down on the spread of germs. Finally, remind children how important it is to **“Wash those hands!”** after blowing their nose, sneezing, or coughing.
- **Keep belongings and surfaces clean.** Babies and toddlers aren't known for neatness. They regularly drop bottles, pacifiers, teething rings, and snacks on the floor—and put them right back in their mouth. Try to intervene before this happens, and teach children to bring dropped items to you to be cleaned off or thrown away. Keep toys clean by washing them often in hot, soapy water or a bleach solution. Use a disinfectant to wipe tables, sinks, countertops, faucets, and toilets or potty chairs.
- **Remember the rule about staying home.** It's best to keep a sick child at home for a few days to rest and recover. This helps not only the child who is ill but every other child in the program, too.

