

## Hand Hygiene

Hand Hygiene is about protecting the people you care for, visitors, colleagues, your family and you.

The most common way germs are spread is by people's hands. Your hands are covered in a range of micro-organisms, many harmless, but some can also cause illnesses such as diarrhoea and vomiting, flu and other serious illness.

Good Hand Hygiene is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infections and help protect those you care for, visitors, colleagues your family and of course yourself.

Good hand hygiene means washing your hands properly with liquid soap and warm water. In some circumstances, when your hands are not visibly dirty or soiled, you could clean your hands thoroughly with an alcohol based hand rub.

However in some outbreak situations such as an outbreak of Norovirus, alcohol based hand rubs are not effective.

You should always carry out hand hygiene at the start of your working day. Throughout the day you will need to assess each task you undertake and ask yourself:-

What have I just done? What am I about to do? What are the risks? Do I need to wash my hands?

But there are occasions when you should ALWAYS carry out hand hygiene.

- Before and after attending to someone with their meal, or to the toilet
- When you have come into contact with any body fluids - urine, blood, saliva, faeces, vomit
- Before handling, preparing or eating food
- When you have taken off your disposable gloves
- Before you leave to go home

This list is not exhaustive, you need to assess each task you do or action you take and decide if there is a risk that your hands have become contaminated.

# Preventing Infection in Care

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Although now widely available, alcohol based hand rubs are not a substitute for liquid soap and water but can be used in the correct situations. However making sure you follow the correct procedure is very important.

When carrying out hand hygiene your hands should be free from stoned rings and wrist jewellery such as bracelets and wrist watches. Nails should be clean and short – no nail varnish or nail extensions. Any cuts, nicks and abrasions should be covered with a waterproof plaster.

Liquid soap contained within a non top-up dispenser is the recommended standard. Bar soap must not be used by staff as it can become contaminated. Bottles of liquid soap should not be topped up or re-used.

Disposable paper hand towels are recommended for drying hands. Never use cotton towels that are shared.

Washing your hands frequently and properly is easy – and once you have applied the liquid soap or alcohol based hand rub it should only take around 15 seconds. Around the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday to yourself

Always use soap and water where possible.

1. Wet your hands with warm running water using a mixer tap if possible
2. Apply liquid soap from a dispenser and cover all your hands to create a lather
3. Rub your hands palm to palm
4. Rub the back of each hand with the palm of the other hand and interlace your fingers
5. Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced
6. Rub the back of your fingers to the opposing palm with fingers interlocked
7. Rub each thumb in turn, holding it in the opposite hand using a rotational movement
8. Rub the tips of your fingers in the opposite palm in a circular motion
9. Rinse your hands with running water
10. Turn off taps - if you have long handled taps use your wrists, if not use a paper towel
11. Dry your hands thoroughly with a single use paper towel.
12. Dispose of the paper towel in the bin.

The ultraviolet light shows the difference when hands have been washed correctly and the parts of the hand commonly missed.

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Cleaning hands properly with an alcohol based hand rub should follow the same procedure as with liquid soap and water and take around 15 seconds.

1. Apply a palm full of alcohol based hand rub from a dispenser into a cupped hand and cover all surfaces.
2. Rub your hands together palm to palm
3. Rub the back of each hand with the palm of the other hand and interlace your fingers
4. Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced
5. Rub the back of your fingers to the opposing palm with fingers interlocked
6. Rub each thumb in turn holding it in the opposite hand using a rotational movement
7. Rub the tips of your fingers in the opposite palm in a circular motion
8. Allow your hands to dry naturally, do not use paper towels.

Alcohol based hand rubs and gels must not be used when:

- Hands are visibly soiled and dirty
- Dealing with someone with diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- After any contact with blood or body fluids
- During any outbreaks of Norovirus or *Clostridium difficile* or other diarrhoeal illness.

In all of these cases hands **must** be washed using liquid soap and water.

Hand creams can protect your skin from drying and chapping. You can use a hand cream when required but only from a pump action dispenser and never from a communal jar or tube as overtime they may contain bacteria.

All staff have a responsibility to encourage people they care for, visitors and family carers to observe good hand hygiene: washing hands before and after eating, after going to the toilet or after coughing or sneezing. Staff may need to direct visitors to where they can wash their hands.

**To break the chain of infection:**

**Remember**

- Hands are covered in micro organisms - even if they look clean
- Hand washing with liquid soap and warm water is the most effective thing you can do to reduce the spread of infection
- Washed hands must be dried thoroughly

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- Alcohol based hand rub can also be used in appropriate circumstances but must follow the correct procedure. This takes 15-20 seconds
- Allow alcohol based hand rub to dry after applying