



Hand Hygiene

Why is hand hygiene important?

- It is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections, including the common cold, flu and hard-to-treat infections such as MRSA
- Infections you get in the hospital can be life threatening and hard to treat.
- All patients are at risk of contracting hospital infections.
- You can take action by asking both your healthcare provider and visitors to wash their hands.



When is hand hygiene important?

Hand hygiene is always important particularly in hospitals but especially:

- Before eating , drinking or taking medication
- Before touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Before and after touching wounds, dressings or tubes/ catheters
- After using the toilet, bedpan or commode
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching hospital surfaces such as bed rails, bedside tables, door knobs, remote controls or phones
- When returning to your room after a test or procedure
- When there is doubt about whether hands are clean

Is there a best way to wash my hands?

When washing your hands, the technique you use matters. We recommend following these 5 steps:

1. Wet your hands with warm water. Apply a quarter –sized amount of soap to your palms.
2. Rub your palms together until the soap lathers well and rub all over your hands including the tops between the fingers and under fingernails
3. Continue rubbing your hands for 15 seconds (sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
4. Rinse both hands well under running water
5. Dry your hands using a paper towel, then use the paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Should I use hand sanitiser or soap and water?

Hand sanitiser can be used in most instances to clean your hands.

You **must** use soap and water:

1. when your hands are visibly dirty
2. if you are being treated for *Clostridium difficile* (*C diff*)





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Ask your healthcare provider

You can protect your health. Healthcare workers know they should practice hand hygiene, but they do sometimes forget. Most will appreciate your friendly reminder.

We encourage you to politely ask your healthcare workers to practice hand hygiene. You can tell them you are concerned that their failing to do so could put you at risk of contracting an infection.

Hand Hygiene is the #1 way to prevent the spread of infections.

WHY? You can take action by practicing hand hygiene regularly and by asking those around you to practice it as well.

WHEN? You and you loved ones should clean your hands very often, especially after touching objects or surfaces in the hospital room, before eating, and after using the toilet. Your healthcare provider should practice hand hygiene every time they give you care.

HOW? It only takes 15 seconds of either soap and water or Purell to kill the germs that can cause infections.

WHICH? Use soap and water when your hands look dirty; otherwise, you can use Purell hand rub.

WHO? You, your loved ones, and your healthcare providers should practice hand hygiene.

Notes:



This information sheet has been produced by
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