

Hand Hygiene for Everyone Key Points



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Why Hand Hygiene Matters:

- Most infections spread through our hands, either directly or by touching contaminated surfaces.
- Washing or sanitizing your hands properly is the best way to prevent the spread of infections.

When to Clean Your Hands:

- After using the toilet or helping someone else.
- After changing nappies.
- After contact with bodily fluids (blood, vomit, urine, saliva, faeces).
- Before eating, preparing, or serving food.
- After touching animals.
- After gardening or any activity that makes your hands dirty.
- After cleaning.
- After handling dirty laundry.
- After blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing.
- Before and after visiting hospitals.
- Before and after using shared keyboards or IT equipment.
- Before putting in eye drops or contact lenses.
- Before and after dealing with catheters, medical equipment, or dressings.
- Before applying lotions or creams to damaged skin.
- After handling urine or faeces samples.

If you are caring for a wound or medical equipment, ask a healthcare worker for detailed hand hygiene instructions.

How to Wash Your Hands with Soap and Water (40-60 seconds):

1. Wet your hands with water and apply enough soap to cover all surfaces.
2. Rub your palms together.
3. Rub the back of each hand with the palm of the other hand, with fingers interlaced.
4. Rub your palms together with fingers interlaced.
5. Rub the backs of your fingers against your palms, with fingers interlaced.
6. Rub each thumb in the opposite hand, using a rotational movement.
7. Rub the tips of your fingers in the opposite palm, in a circular motion.
8. Rinse your hands with water.
9. Dry your hands thoroughly.

How to Use Hand Gel (20-30 seconds):

1. Apply enough hand gel to cover all surfaces of your hands.
2. Rub your palms together.
3. Rub the back of each hand with the palm of the other hand, with fingers interlaced.
4. Rub your palms together with fingers interlaced.
5. Rub the backs of your fingers against your palms, with fingers interlaced.
6. Rub each thumb in the opposite hand, using a rotational movement.
7. Rub the tips of your fingers in the opposite palm, in a circular motion.

What to Use:

- Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel.
- Hand gel is effective against many germs, including those that cause colds, flu, and wound infections.
- Use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty or after using the toilet or when dealing with stomach bugs.
- If soap and water are not available, hand gel is better than nothing.

Healthcare Staff and Hand Hygiene:

- Healthcare staff will always clean their hands before and after touching patients.
- They may clean their hands at other times during treatment.
- Staff will be "bare below the elbows" (no jewellery, watches, false nails, or long sleeves).
- Staff may wear disposable gloves, but they still need to wash their hands.
- Patients are encouraged to remind healthcare staff to clean their hands.

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