

Hand Hygiene

Consistent hand washing/antiseptis is vital to preventing healthcare acquired infections. It is the cheapest and single most important measure in preventing the spread of microbes and infections in hospital settings.

Healthcare professionals sometimes unknowingly act as carriers of microbes, creating a potential risk to themselves, co-workers, and their patients. When hand hygiene techniques breakdown, micro-organisms spread. Unfortunately, numerous studies show that health care workers clean their hands only half of the times that they should.

Hand washing/antiseptis is always the first step in any patient care contact and the last step after patient contact.

Times to perform hand hygiene:

- Upon arrival to work.
- *Before* every patient contact.
- *After* every patient contact.
- *After* removing gloves.
- *After* handling contaminated materials/items.
- General hygiene – *before* eating, *after* trips to the washroom, *before* feeding patients.
- *Before* leaving for the day.

A medical hand wash

The minimum duration for a proper hand wash (steps 3-7) is 15 seconds, more time may be required if hands are visibly soiled.

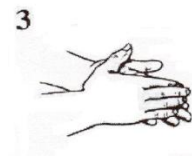


Wet hands with warm water.

Wetting hands first will make a better lather and reduces skin irritation caused by soap. Hot water can damage and dry your skin. Water allows for suspension and washing away of the loosened germs.



Add 1 pump of soap to the palm.



Rub hands together to create a lather, using friction.

Friction loosens the microbes.

4



Interlace fingers while rubbing palms together. Then rub soap over L dorsum; repeat with L. palm over R. dorsum.

5



Work knuckles of L. hand into R. palm then knuckles of R. hand into L. palm.

6



Rub L. thumb and knuckles with R. palm. Repeat with R. thumb and L. palm.

7



Work R. fingertips and thumb into L. palm. Massage soap into nail spaces. Repeat with L. fingertips into R. palms.

8



Rinse well under running water.

Running water is used to prevent recontamination of hands and washes the microbes and residual soap down the drain.

9



Pat dry hands with paper towel. Turn taps off with a clean paper towel.

Drying achieves a further reduction in the number of microbes. Re-useable towels are avoided because of the potential for microbial contamination.

The taps and sink are very contaminated. Using a clean paper towel protects your clean hands from recontamination.

Also, keep fingernails short and well manicured and do not use fingernail polish or artificial nails. Artificial nails including wraps, acrylics or tips increase bacterial load. Nail polish and artificial nails can prevent the detection of soil under nails and may promote the growths of some pathogens. Jewelry traps microbes and may damage gloves. Capital Health has a “no artificial nail” policy for anyone with direct patient contact. Please limit jewelry; and remove as necessary.

The routine use of water based hand lotion between hand washing is also recommended.

Waterless Hand Rinse – make it a part of your practice!

It’s a fast & easy way to clean your hands.

Hand antiseptics with an alcohol based hand rinse is now recognized as the primary method of routine hand hygiene for healthcare providers. Research has shown that alcohol based hand rinses are superior to soap and water and are an effective alternative to hand washing. Research has also identified that alcohol based hand rinses with emollients caused significantly less skin irritation and dryness than did washing hands with soap and water.

Please Note:

It is necessary to wash hands with an antiseptic soap and water when hands are visibly dirty or soiled with organic material.



Use of alcohol-based hand rinses:

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| 1. Apply a sufficient amount of alcohol-based rinse (2-3 pumps) to the cupped palm of one hand. Amount used depends on the specific product. |
| 2. Moisten all surfaces of both hands, including wrists, sides of hands and especially under fingernails and cuticles. |
| 3. Rub thoroughly until hands feel dry. Hands should stay wet for about 30 seconds. |
| 4. The product we have within Capital Health contains emollients to protect and moisturize the skin. |

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