



# Hand hygiene

LCC IPC Guidance

Review December 2020

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## **Hand hygiene (hand decontamination)**

### **What is hand hygiene?**

Hand hygiene is the foundation of good infection prevention and control.

The following general guidelines for hand care should be followed when decontaminating hands with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub.

- Staff who deliver 'hands on' care should be 'bare below the elbows'.
- Short sleeves should be worn to allow access to the wrist to ensure good hand washing technique.
- Keep nails short, no nail varnish, artificial extensions or gel etc.
- No wrist watches or jewellery should be worn around the wrist.
- Only one plain ring with no stones should be worn.
- Cover all cuts/abrasions with a waterproof dressing that completely covers the wound.
- Ensure liquid soap and disposable paper towels are of good quality.
- Use alcohol hand rub where appropriate, e.g. in the absence of the ability to wash hands with soap and water.
- Hand cream can be applied to protect skin from drying.
- Staff with skin conditions such as dermatitis should seek expert advice for treatment and management (Occupational Health)
- Advice should be sought from Occupational Health if a potential reaction to soap/hand cream is suspected.

### **Hands must be decontaminated:**

- Before touching a client.
- Before a clean/aseptic procedure.
- After body fluid exposure risk.
- After touching a client.
- After touching the client's surroundings.

### **When to wash your hands with soap and water**

Use the six stage hand washing technique (appendix 1) when hands are visibly soiled or potentially contaminated with dirt or organic material. Effective hand washing with a non-medicated liquid soap will remove transient micro-organisms and is adequate hand decontamination for everyday clinical practice.

- Before and following any activity that may soil your hands, e.g. after going to the toilet.
- Before direct hands on contact with a client.
- After direct hands on contact with a client.
- After handling any body fluids or waste or soiled items.
- After handling specimens (i.e. urine sample).
- Before preparing, handling or eating food.
- Before putting on gloves.
- After removing gloves.
- Before commencing work and leaving a work area.
- Before performing invasive care (for example catheter care, wound dressing, handling gastrostomy tubes, P.E.G. feeds).
- Following disposal of any waste.
- Following environmental cleaning.

### How to wash your hands

- Roll up long sleeves.
- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap.
- Rub hands using the technique described in the diagram shown in appendix 1
- Dry hands thoroughly

### Alcohol based hand rub

Alcohol based hand preparations offer an acceptable alternative to hand washing when the hands are not grossly soiled, as they do not remove dirt and organic material.

- If decontaminating hands with an alcohol based hand rub, hands must be free from dirt and organic material.
- Ensure all surfaces of the hand are covered in the solution.
- Rub hands together vigorously until the solution has evaporated and hands are dry using the technique shown in appendix 1.
- Alcohol based hand rub should **not** be used in cases of diarrhoea and vomiting where handwashing should always be carried out.

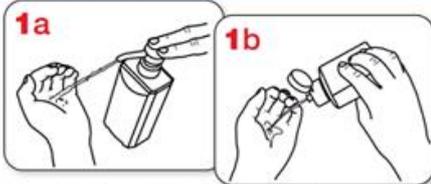
### Hand drying

- Wet surfaces transfer micro-organisms more effectively than dry ones.
- Ensure your hands are dry using paper towels as available, or a hand dryer.
- Inadequately dried hands are susceptible to skin damage.
- Regular use of a moisturising hand cream will help prevent skin damage.

Follow the WHO 5 moments for hand hygiene (appendix 2)

Appendix 1

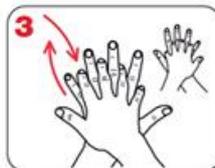
## How to handrub? WITH ALCOHOL-BASED FORMULATION



Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand and cover all surfaces.



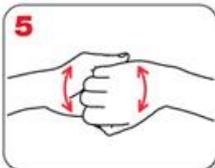
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa



rinse hands with water



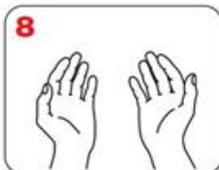
dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



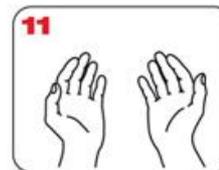
20-30 sec



...once dry, your hands are safe.



40-60 sec



...and your hands are safe.



WHO acknowledges the Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève (HUG), in particular the members of the Infection Control Programme, for their active participation in developing this material.



October 2006, version 1.

Appendix 2

## Your 5 moments for hand hygiene at the point of care\*



\*Adapted from the WHO Alliance for Patient Safety 2006