

Hand Hygiene

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- Hand hygiene is the most effective way of preventing the spread of infection. Germs can stay on your hands and be transferred. Think of all the things and people you touch in a day. You use the bathroom, are in public spaces, handle money, care for patients, touch your face, touch doorknobs and food. The list is endless. Practicing good hand hygiene helps protect your patients, yourself, your family and others. You might think you don't always have time to clean your hands, but in all the things you're rushing around to do- caring for your patient- you might be causing more harm than good if you don't take a moment for hand hygiene.

When Should You Do Hand Hygiene?

- Before and after caring for a patient
- After caring for personal needs, such as using the toilet, blowing your nose, covering a sneeze, combing hair etc.
- Before consuming, handling or serving food or drink
- Upon return from public places
- Before and after each shift or upon leaving one home and entering another
- After any contamination or after handling waste materials, secretions, drainage or blood
- After handling soiled items, including linens, clothing, bedpans, urinals, or garbage
- Before and after wearing gloves
- Before and after touching wounds

CDC Recommendations for Handwashing

- Follow these five steps every time.
 1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
 3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
 4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
 5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Use Hand Sanitizer Too!

- Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.
- Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However,
 - Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
 - Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
 - Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

Gloves

- Gloves are an important part of patient care. They are worn to avoid:
 - Picking up a pathogen from a patient
 - Giving a patient a pathogen that is on your hands
 - Picking up a pathogen and contaminating environmental surfaces and personal property on the hands
 - Passing a pathogen to a coworker, visitor, family member from your hands
- Clean exam gloves are generally used in the home. Most of the gloves used today are made of nitrile, vinyl and other synthetic products. Disposable gloves are to be used only once and may not be washed or reused. Gloves do not take the place of proper handwashing. You must clean your hands before and after touching a patient, even if you wear gloves.

Gloves Cont.

- Gloves will become contaminated while providing care to a patient, so it's important to remove gloves immediately after providing that care. Gloves must be changed if they become damaged or soiled in any way. It's easy to contaminate the patient's room with gloved hands, so aides must remove gloves, wash hands and replace gloves in the presence of open sores and cuts, before touching bodily fluids, and before and after:
 - Assisting with or performing mouth care
 - Assisting with or performing perineal care
 - Performing any other personal care
 - Shaving a patient
 - Disposing of soiled linens, dressings or pads

Removing Gloves

- If your hands get contaminated during glove removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Using a gloved hand, grasp the palm area of the other gloved hand and peel off first glove
- Hold removed glove in gloved hand
- Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist and peel off second glove over first glove
- Discard gloves in a waste container

Sneezing and Coughing

- Never sneeze or cough into your hands. If you do accidentally, be sure to immediately sanitize or wash them. Using a tissue is best, but if you can't use a tissue, use the crook of the arm. This is an area unlikely to touch others and it provides a better shield to prevent contact with others. Either way, clean the hands or elbow with alcohol. Discard tissue correctly. Try to cough and sneeze away from others. Even if the cause is allergies, you can still transmit microbes you might be carrying.