Hand Hygiene
An information guide
Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most effective way for patients, visitors and staff to prevent the spread of infection.

Why we should wash our hands

During the course of a normal day your hands are used to touch and handle many things. Many infection control problems are caused by micro-organisms (germs) which are picked up on your hands during everyday activities. Effective hand hygiene will give protection to you and help to prevent the transfer of germs to other people.

What to do

To prevent germs spreading, there are two ways to clean your hands whilst in hospital. These are:

• soap and water
• alcohol hand rub.

It is important to wash your hands:

• before entering and leaving a ward or department
• after visiting the toilet/bathroom
• after any episode of vomiting or diarrhoea
• before handling food
• when your hands are visibly soiled
• after blowing/wiping your nose, or covering a sneeze or cough
• after coughing or sneezing into hands
• prior to meals
• after changing a nappy
• after handling rubbish.
Using the alcohol hand rub

These kill about 99% of germs in around 30 seconds and dry naturally on the skin. Hand rub is provided inside the entrance to wards and departments and by beds or treatment areas. It is very convenient to use and you don’t need to be near a sink to effectively clean your hands. It is a quick and effective alternative to soap and water. It is safe to use the alcohol hand rub:

• on entering and leaving a ward or department if visiting
• as an alternative to soap and water if hands are visibly clean.

However, there are situations when soap and water must be used. If you have diarrhoea/vomiting please use soap and water as the alcohol gel will be ineffective. Also, if your ward has an outbreak of diarrhoea/vomiting then soap and water must always be used and the staff on the ward will make you aware of this.

Please note

Do not hesitate to ask the nurse caring for you to help you wash your hands before meals and after using the toilet.

This is an important part of your care while you are in hospital and nursing staff will be pleased to assist you. Being confined to your bed should not be a reason for you not to wash your hands. If you are too poorly or have restricted mobility then “wet wipes” should be provided for you.

To help reduce hospital acquired infection, please ask all healthcare workers when caring for you, if they have washed their hands or used the alcohol hand rub, prior to carrying out any direct care. The World Health Organisation (WHO) identify 5 moments for hand hygiene. These 5 moments ensure that staff clean their hands at appropriate times during an episode of patient care.
This ensures that the patients and staff are protected from the spread of infection. The 5 moments are:

1. before patient contact.
2. before an aseptic (sterile or 'clean') task (i.e. inserting a cannula, changing a dressing).
3. after body fluid exposure.
4. after patient contact.
5. after contact with patient surroundings.

Dont forget, please encourage children to wash their hands also whilst visiting you in hospital. Encourage them to wash their hands by showing them how to do it and by setting them a good example.

For further information please contact the Infection Control Team.

Fairfield 0161 778 2428
   Internally: 82428/82912/88526
North Manchester 0161 720 2935
   Internally: 4293543794/43933
Royal Oldham 0161 656 1922
   0161 627 8771
   Internally: 71922 / 78771/71923
Rochdale Hospitals 01706 517900
   Internally: 57900/57198
The 7 Step Hand Cleansing Technique
Note: Repeat each step 5 times.

Step 1 - Rubbing palm to palm

Step 2 - Right palm over opposing back of left hand and left palm over opposing back of right hand.

Step 3 - Rubbing palm to palm fingers interlaced.
Step 4 - Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.

Step 5 - Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and then right thumb clasped in left palm.

Step 6 - Rotational rubbing with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and then left hand in right palm.
Step 7 - Rubbing of both left and right wrists

- wet hands and apply soap from the dispenser
- rub vigorously all parts of the hand and wrist (see step by step above)
- rinse and dry well.
If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Ethnic Health Team on 0161 627 8770

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897

For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

Date of publication: November 2004
Date of review: January 2017
Date of next review: January 2019
Ref: PI_DS_062
© The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

www.pat.nhs.uk