

*Guidelines*

**CARNA** College & Association of  
Registered Nurses of Alberta

# Guidelines for Hand Hygiene

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Developed in collaboration with:



Approved by the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA)  
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Hand hygiene is the most effective way of preventing the transmission of healthcare-associated infection (HAI) to patients, staff, and visitors in all healthcare settings. Effective hand hygiene programs include proper training and education on policies, procedures, and practices that are reviewed on a regular basis.

1. Hand hygiene is performed in accordance with the 4 Moments of Hand Hygiene.
  - a. Before contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. donning personal protective equipment (PPE), entering an examination room, providing patient care).
  - b. Before a clean or aseptic procedure (e.g. wound care, handling intravenous devices, handling food, preparing medications).
  - c. After exposure or risk of exposure to blood and/or body fluids (e.g. hands visibly soiled, after removal of gloves).
  - d. After contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. doffing PPE, leaving examination room, after handling patient care equipment).
2. Appropriate products are selected and used for hand hygiene.
  - a. Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) containing 60-90% alcohol are used for performing hand hygiene, except in situations described in "b".
  - b. Plain soap and water are used:
    - ◆ When hands are visibly soiled with food, dirt, blood, body fluids and/or a buildup of ABHR;
    - ◆ During food preparation;
    - ◆ Following glove removal when providing care for patients with diarrhea and/or vomiting.
  - c. Antimicrobial (antiseptic) soap is only used in limited circumstances, such as before aseptic procedures, and is not used for routine hand hygiene.
  - d. Hand cleaning wipes/towelettes are only used for hand cleaning in exceptional circumstances when sinks and running water are not available; hand hygiene using ABHR must be done following use of hand cleaning wipes/towelettes.
  - e. If hand lotions are used, they are compatible with hand hygiene products selected.

3. ABHRs are used in accordance with the following procedure:
  - a. Hands are not visibly soiled and are dry before use;
  - b. Enough ABHR is applied to ensure coverage of all hand surfaces;
  - c. Product is vigorously rubbed over all surfaces of the hands and wrists, including: palms, space between fingers, back of hands and wrists, fingers, fingertips, and thumbs;
  - d. Hands remain wet for a minimum of 15 seconds;
  - e. Hands are rubbed until completely dry.
4. Soap and water are used in accordance with the following procedure:
  - a. Hands are wet with warm water and enough soap is applied to ensure lathering of all hand surfaces;
  - b. Hands are vigorously rubbed over all surfaces of the hands and wrists, including: palms, space between fingers, back of hands and wrists, fingers, fingertips, and thumbs;
  - c. Hands are rubbed for a minimum of 15 seconds;
  - d. Hands are rinsed under warm, running water;
  - e. Hands are dried with disposable paper towels;
  - f. Hands are not re-contaminated after washing (i.e. faucet is turned off and doors are opened with paper towel);
  - g. Paper towels are discarded in a waste receptacle.
5. Hand hygiene is supported by adequate infrastructure.
  - a. Hand hygiene products are as close as possible to the point of care.
  - b. Wall-mounted ABHR dispensers are installed in appropriate designated areas away from sinks and in accordance with the Alberta Fire Code. Areas include, but are not limited to:
    - ◆ Examination rooms
    - ◆ Public areas (e.g. building entrance/exits)
    - ◆ Nursing stations
    - ◆ Medication carts

- ◆ Staff rooms
  - ◆ Computer stations
  - ◆ Medical device reprocessing areas
  - ◆ Clinical and medication preparation areas without sinks
- c. Hand hygiene products are not used past expiry. Date of expiration is visible on product containers.
- d. Sinks dedicated for hand hygiene are not used for other purposes (e.g. equipment cleaning, waste disposal, food preparation).
- e. Hand hygiene products are available for patients and visitors.
6. Employees that cannot perform adequate hand hygiene do not perform tasks that require hand hygiene.
- a. Employees that cannot perform adequate hand hygiene include, but is not limited to individuals:
- ◆ Wearing casts, dressings, and/or splints.
  - ◆ Wearing artificial nails, nail enhancements, and/or chipped nail polish.
  - ◆ Wearing hand jewelry other than a simple ring (i.e. band).
  - ◆ Experiencing hand sensitivity reactions (e.g. dermatitis).
- b. Tasks that require hand hygiene include, but are not limited to:
- ◆ Providing patient care.
  - ◆ Reprocessing or handling surgical linens and/or medical devices.
  - ◆ Preparing pharmaceuticals or medications.
  - ◆ Handling food.
7. Hand hygiene training and education is provided to new employees during orientation and ongoing thereafter.

## References

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