

# Guidelines for Hand Hygiene

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# Hand Hygiene

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 the following:
    - 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); and
  - 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; and
  - handling food.
- 7.** Hand hygiene training and education is provided to new employees during orientation and ongoing thereafter.

## References

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