

Hand Hygiene

What is hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene means removing dirt and germs from your hands by cleaning your hands with soap and water. Hand hygiene also means killing germs on your hands by using an anti-septic such as alcohol hand gel.

Why is hand hygiene important?

The most common way to spread germs from person to person is on the hands.

Doing hand hygiene removes germs before they can be spread to someone else. Hand hygiene helps prevent infections caused by germs.

When should I do hand hygiene?

You should do hand hygiene often, including:

- ▶ Before eating
- ▶ After using the restroom
- ▶ Before leaving your room
- ▶ After touching surfaces or medical equipment
- ▶ After taking off gloves or a gown

How do I do hand hygiene?

Using soap and water

Always use soap and water to clean your hands if they are visibly dirty.

1. **Wet** your hands with running water.
2. **Apply** soap and rub it over all parts of your hands and nails for 10 seconds or longer.
3. **Rinse** off the soap with water and keep your

fingers pointing down.

4. **Dry** your hands with a paper towel.
5. **Hold** the faucet with the paper towel so that you can turn it off without getting your hands dirty again.

Using alcohol hand gel

Use alcohol hand gel to clean your hands when they are not visibly dirty.

1. **Squirt** gel into the palm of one hand.
2. **Rub** the gel over all parts of your hands and nails for 10 seconds or longer until it dries.

When will my healthcare staff do hand hygiene?

Staff will do hand hygiene often when taking care of you, including:

- ▶ Before and after touching you
- ▶ After taking off gloves, gowns, or masks

Your healthcare team members want to do their best at all times, so don't be afraid to ask them if they have done hand hygiene!

Questions?

Feel free to talk to your nurse, doctor, or call the Hospital Epidemiology Service at 301-496-2209.

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