



Patients and visitors:
**What you need to
know about
hand hygiene.**

Clean hands save lives



Why is hand hygiene important?

Hospital patients are generally unwell, recovering from an operation or may have decreased immunity leaving them at increased risk of infection from germs. We want to help stop patients from getting these infections because they often cause lengthy and serious infection in people who are already unwell. One of the easiest and most effective ways to reduce infection is for all staff, patients and visitors to practice good hand hygiene.

What is good hand hygiene?

Good hand hygiene means washing using either alcohol-based hand rubs or soap and water to help stop the spread of germs. By stopping the spread of germs we can reduce infections among patients.

Our commitment to you

All staff in this hospital treat hand hygiene seriously because we know this is one of the easiest ways to help keep patients as safe and healthy as possible.

Our staff should clean their hands 'at each contact' or, put more simply, before and after touching each patient.

During your stay as a patient or visitor at this hospital we invite you to join us in the fight against infection by achieving the best hand hygiene possible.

Hand hygiene is everyone's business

Patients and visitors have an important role to play in ensuring hand hygiene throughout the hospital.

- **Visitors** should clean their hands each time they enter or leave a patient's room.

- **Patients** and visitors should never touch wounds, dressings, intravenous lines or other tools being used to treat a patient.
- **Patients** should have good personal hygiene, especially while in hospital. This includes cleaning their hands after going to the toilet and before meals.

It's OK to ask



From time to time our staff can become very busy, and patients may wonder if their doctor, nurse or other healthcare provider cleaned their hands before and after touching them.

As part of your role in the fight against infection we hope you will remember that 'it's OK to ask'. If you are in any doubt, don't hesitate to remind hospital staff about this important practice.

How to clean with alcohol-based hand rubs*

Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on the skin, are fast acting and can cause less skin irritation than frequent use of soap and water.

Alcohol-based hand rubs don't work well when skin is visibly unclean because they don't release and rinse away dirt the way soap and water do.

- Alcohol-based hand rubs clean hands without water.
- They evaporate cleanly away, and also contain moisturising agents to preserve your skin's good conditions.



The key steps to good hand hygiene with an alcohol-based hand rub are:

1. Apply the product to the palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers, until hands are dry.
2. Long fingernails or artificial nails make hand hygiene difficult to achieve. For these people extra attention to scrubbing underneath fingernails is required to remove dirt and germs.

* International Muslim Imam scholars allow the use of alcoholic hand rub for hygiene purposes

How to clean hands with soap and water

Soap and running water remove dirt and grease from hands. This is the best way to clean your hands when they are visibly dirty.

The six key steps to good hand washing with soap and water are:

1. Turn on water and let it run over hands.
2. Apply soap.
3. Rub hands together in order to work up a lather.
4. Cover and rub all surfaces of the hands. Lather and rub for at least 10 to 15 seconds. Rinse hands thoroughly.
5. Pat hands dry with a clean paper towel.
6. Dispose of towel in a waste bin.



In one eight hour shift the average nurse can spend close to one hour ensuring good hand hygiene with soap and water.*

Based on a total time of 56 minutes reached through seven (60 second) hand washing episodes an hour.

* Source: Voss A. and Widmer AF, Infect Control Hospital Epidemiology 1997.

The role of gloves

Gloves can be a helpful and important supplement to good hand hygiene. However, gloves don't eliminate the need for hand washing.



The campaign posters you'll see in this building are there to keep reminding everyone how important clean hands are in the fight to prevent infections.

Like to know more?

Please speak to any of the staff caring for you. They can also refer you to our infection control practitioners if you require more detailed information.

Remember, it's OK to ask.