

HAND WASHING AND HAND HYGIENE

PURPOSE:

Appropriate hand hygiene is essential in preventing the spread of infectious organisms in healthcare settings.

DEFINITIONS: Antimicrobial soap:	Soap containing antiseptic agent.
Antiseptic hand wash:	Washing hands with water and soap or other detergents containing an antiseptic agent.
Antiseptic hand rub:	Applying a waterless antiseptic agent to all surfaces of the hands to reduce the number of microorganisms present
Hand antiseptis:	Refers to either antiseptic hand wash or antiseptic hand rub
Hand hygiene:	A general term that applies to either handwashing, antiseptic hand wash, or antiseptic hand rub.
Handwashing:	Washing hands with plain (i.e., non-antimicrobial) soap and water
Plain soap:	Refers to products that do not contain antimicrobial agents, or contain very low concentrations of antimicrobial agents that are effective only as preservatives.
Visibly soiled hands:	Hands showing visible dirt or visibly contaminated with blood, fecal material, urine, etc.
Waterless antiseptic agent:	An antiseptic agent that does not require use of water. After applying such an agent, the individual rubs hands together until the agent has dried.

1. Hand hygiene must be performed after touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, and contaminated items. Specific examples include but are not limited to:

- a) Before performing invasive procedures (i.e. catheterization, starting IV's).
- b) Before contact with particularly susceptible residents (open wounds, etc.).
- c) Before touching medication or food to be given to a resident.
- d) Before and after touching wounds of any kind.
- e) Before and after providing personal cares for a resident.
- f) After removing gloves.
- g) After touching any item or surface that may have been contaminated with blood or body fluids, excretions or secretions (i.e. measuring graduate, commode).
- h) After caring for a resident with an active infection.
- i) Between contacts with different residents.
- j) After going to the bathroom, nose blowing, covering a sneeze and coughing.
- k) Before eating and before going home at the end of the shift.

2. Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) is the preferred method for hand hygiene. Soap and water are recommended in specific circumstances, including when hands are visibly soiled or during outbreaks of *C. difficile* or norovirus.

3. *C. difficile* bacteria are killed by ABHR, but *C difficile* spores are not inactivated by ABHR.

4. If your hands are not visibly soiled, use an alcohol-based hand rub for routine hand antisepsis before and after direct contact with residents; and after removing gloves.

5. Alcohol-based hand rub recommendations exclude food preparation areas, where food handlers must wash their hands with soap and water.

6. Use of soap and water:

- a) When hands are visibly dirty;
- b) After known or suspected exposure to *Clostridium difficile* if facility is experiencing an outbreak or higher endemic rates;
- c) After known or suspected exposure to patients with infectious diarrhea during norovirus outbreaks;

- d) Before eating;
 - e) After using the restroom;
 - f) If exposure to *Bacillus anthracis* is suspected or proven;
7. For everything else use an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR).

PROCEDURE:

1. Handwashing with plain or antimicrobial soap:

- a) Push up long sleeves
- b) Wet hands with running water.
- c) Apply handwashing agent and thoroughly disperse over hands.
- d) Wash hands and wrists using friction for 20 seconds on all surfaces including under fingernail.
- e) Rinse thoroughly with arms extended downward.
- f) Pat dry thoroughly with paper towel.
- g) If the sink has hand controls, use a paper towel to shut off the faucet.

2. Using alcohol antiseptic hand rub:

- a) Apply approximately a dime size (ABHR) or enough to cover all surfaces of your hands.
- b) Spread thoroughly over hands, including under fingernails.
- c) Rub your hands together until they are dry.
- d) Follow manufacturer's instructions for number of uses before soap and water wash is necessary.

References:

- 1. IDPH memo February 5, 2019
- 2. CDC guidelines on hand hygiene
- 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2002)
- 3. OSHA. *Occupational Exposure to Blood borne Pathogens*. 1991.
- 4. WHO. World Health Organization.
- 5. SHEA. Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America. 2014

These guidelines are not meant to be exclusive or exhaustive. Guidelines are meant to leave room for the exercise of professional judgment based on individual circumstances.