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Hand Hygiene CDC

Healthcare Providers

Clean Hands Count for Healthcare Providers



Protect yourself and your patients from potentially deadly germs by cleaning your hands. Be sure you clean your hands the right way at the right times.

[Hand Hygiene Guideline](#)

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Introduction to Hand Hygiene

Hand Hygiene means cleaning your hands by using either handwashing (washing hands with soap and water), antiseptic hand wash, antiseptic hand rub (i.e. alcohol-based hand sanitizer including foam or gel), or surgical hand antisepsis

Cleaning your hands reduces:

- The spread of potentially deadly germs to patients
- The risk of healthcare provider colonization or infection caused by germs acquired from the patient
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are the most effective products for reducing the number of germs on the hands of healthcare providers.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are the preferred method for cleaning your hands in most clinical situations.
- Wash your hands with soap and water whenever they are visibly dirty, before eating, and after using the restroom.

During Routine Patient Care:

During Routine Patient Care, Two Methods for Hand Hygiene

Use an Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer

- Immediately before touching a patient
- Before performing an aseptic task (e.g., placing an indwelling device) or handling invasive medical devices
- Before moving from work on a soiled body site to a clean body site on the same patient
- After touching a patient or the patient's immediate environment
- After contact with blood, body fluids or contaminated surfaces
- Immediately after glove removal

Wash with Soap and Water

- When hands are visibly soiled
- After caring for a person with known or suspected infectious diarrhea
- After known or suspected exposure to spores (e.g. *B. anthracis*, *C difficile* outbreaks)

When and How to Perform Hand Hygiene

Multiple opportunities for hand hygiene may occur during a single care episode. Following are the clinical indications for hand hygiene:

Clinical Indications for the Two Methods for Hand Hygiene

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When using alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Put product on hands and rub hands together
- Cover all surfaces until hands feel dry
- This should take around 20 seconds
- The CDC [Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings pdf icon\[PDF – 1.3 MB\]](#) recommends:
 - When cleaning your hands with soap and water, wet your hands first with water, apply the amount of product recommended by the manufacturer to your hands, and rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers.
 - Rinse your hands with water and use disposable towels to dry. Use towel to turn off the faucet.
 - Avoid using hot water, to prevent drying of skin.
- Other entities have recommended that cleaning your hands with soap and water should take around 20 seconds.
- Either time is acceptable. The focus should be on cleaning your hands at the right times.

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Glove Use

- Wear gloves, according to Standard Precautions, when it can be reasonably anticipated that contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, potentially contaminated skin or contaminated equipment could occur.
- Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene.
 - If your task requires gloves, perform hand hygiene prior to donning gloves, before touching the patient or the patient environment.
 - Perform hand hygiene immediately after removing gloves.
- Change gloves and perform hand hygiene during patient care, if
 - gloves become damaged,
 - gloves become visibly soiled with blood or body fluids following a task,
 - moving from work on a soiled body site to a clean body site on the same patient or if another clinical indication for hand hygiene occurs.
- Never wear the same pair of gloves in the care of more than one patient.
- Carefully remove gloves to prevent hand contamination.

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Hand Hygiene for Surgery

- Remove rings, watches, and bracelets before beginning the surgical hand scrub
- Remove debris from underneath fingernails using a nail cleaner under running water
- Performing surgical hand antisepsis using either an antimicrobial soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with persistent activity is recommended before donning sterile gloves when performing surgical procedures
- When performing surgical hand antisepsis using an antimicrobial soap, scrub hands and forearms for the length of time recommended by the manufacturer, usually 2–6 minutes.
- Long scrub times (e.g., 10 minutes) are not necessary
- When using an alcohol-based surgical hand-scrub product with persistent activity, follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Before applying the alcohol solution, prewash hands and forearms with a non-antimicrobial soap and dry hands and forearms completely
- After application of the alcohol-based product as recommended, allow hands and forearms to dry thoroughly before donning sterile gloves
- Double gloving is advised during invasive procedures, such as surgery, that pose an increased risk of blood exposure
- Bacteria on the hands of surgeons can cause wound infections if introduced into the operative field during surgery
- Rapid multiplication of bacteria occurs under surgical gloves if hands are washed with a non-antimicrobial soap
- Bacterial growth is slowed after preoperative scrubbing with an antiseptic agent

- Reducing resident skin flora on the hands of the surgical team for the duration of a procedure reduces the risk of bacteria being released into the surgical field if gloves become punctured or torn during surgery

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Skin and Nail Care

- Lotions and creams can prevent and decrease skin dryness that happens from cleaning your hands
- Use only hand lotions approved by your healthcare facility because they won't interfere with hand sanitizing products
- Germs can live under artificial fingernails both before and after using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and handwashing
- It is recommended that healthcare providers do not wear artificial fingernails or extensions when having direct contact with patients at high risk (e.g., those in intensive-care units or operating rooms)
- Keep natural nail tips less than ¼ inch long
- Some studies have shown that skin underneath rings contains more germs than comparable areas of skin on fingers without rings
- Further studies are needed to determine if wearing rings results in an increased spread of potentially deadly germs

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Guidelines

1. [Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings; 17-18 pdf icon\[PDF – 495 KB\]](#).
2. [Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings](#).
3. [Guideline for Prevention of Surgical Site Infection; pp. 258 and 267](#).

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Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#), [Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion \(DHQP\)](#)
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