



Northwest General Hospital
A Project of Alliance Healthcare Limited
Infection Prevention and Control Committee
NWGH Hand Hygiene & Hand Washing
Policy





ISSUE #: 01

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WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HAND HYGIENE POLICY?

This policy aims to ensure that all clinical staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Hand Hygiene by outlining:

- The principles behind Hand Hygiene;
- The appropriate methods, products and procedures required to carry out effective Hand Hygiene.

WHO SHOULD READ AND FAMILIARIZE WITH CONTENTS IN THIS DOCUMENT?

All clinical staff of Alliance Healthcare (NWGH Project-I & II).

KEY MESSAGE

When should hands be cleaned?

According to World Health Organization ([WHO], 2006a), the following are the most important moments to prevent Healthcare Associated Infection (HCAI):

- Before and after contact with patient
- Before initiating a clean/aseptic procedure
- After exposure to body fluid (and after removal of gloves)
- After contact with patient surroundings



In addition, hand hygiene should be undertaken:

- On entering and leaving any clinical area
- Before eating or drinking
- Before food or drink service or administration of medicines
- Before contact with immunocompromised patients
- Before caring for those at higher risk of acquiring infection
- After coughing/sneezing
- After using the toilet

Liquid soap and running water

Liquid soap and water must be used when:

- Hands are visibly soiled
- Contact with body fluids
- The patient has diarrhoea

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- Patient or a ward/clinical area is affected by known or suspected viral gastroenteritis (e.g. Norovirus)

BACKGROUND & SCOPE

Hand Hygiene is the most important procedure which contributes significantly to keeping patients safe. It is a simple, low-cost action to prevent the spread of many of the microorganism that cause Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAs).

Whilst hand hygiene is not the only measure to reduce HCAI, compliance can dramatically enhance patient safety. The WHO (2011) estimated a prevalence of HCAI amongst hospitalized patients of 5.7% - 19.1%.

This policy outlines how and when hands should be decontaminated.

For the purposes of this policy 'hand hygiene' includes both hand washing with liquid soap and water and hand disinfection using alcohol hand rub.

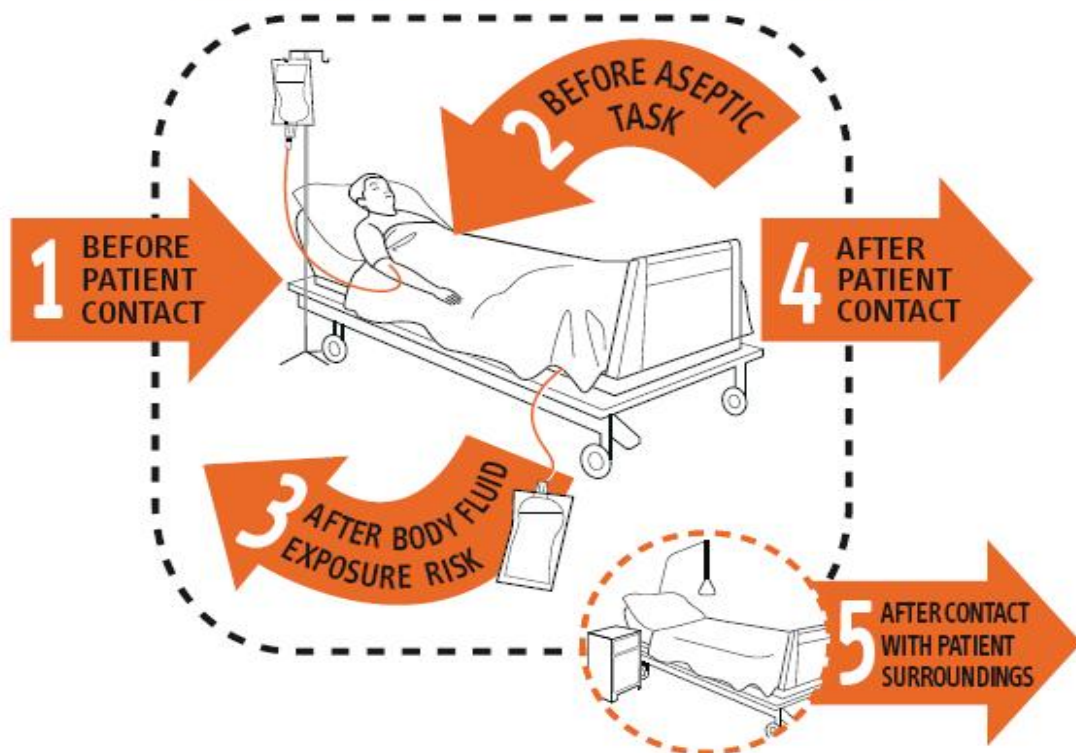
POLICY

1. When to wash your hands?



The WHO (2006b) has identified the most important moments healthcare workers should undertake hand hygiene (Figure 1 & Appendix 1).

Figure 1 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene (WHO 2006)

Your 5 moments for HAND HYGIENE



1 BEFORE PATIENT CONTACT	WHEN? Clean your hands before touching a patient when approaching him or her WHY? To protect the patient against harmful germs carried on your hands
2 BEFORE AN ASEPTIC TASK	WHEN? Clean your hands immediately before any aseptic task WHY? To protect the patient against harmful germs, including the patient's own germs, entering his or her body
3 AFTER BODY FLUID EXPOSURE RISK	WHEN? Clean your hands immediately after an exposure risk to body fluids (and after glove removal) WHY? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs
4 AFTER PATIENT CONTACT	WHEN? Clean your hands after touching a patient and his or her immediate surroundings when leaving WHY? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs
5 AFTER CONTACT WITH PATIENT SURROUNDINGS	WHEN? Clean your hands after touching any object or furniture in the patient's immediate surroundings, when leaving - even without touching the patient WHY? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs

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2. Selecting the correct hand hygiene product

Liquid soap and running water

Liquid soap and running water can be used for any situation where hand hygiene is required. Liquid soap and water **must** be used when:

- Hands are visibly soiled
- The patient has diarrhea
- A patient or a ward/clinical area is affected by known or suspected viral gastroenteritis
- There has been contact with body fluids

Alcohol hand rub (gel)

Alcohol hand rub is highly effective and convenient. It can be used in almost any situation where hand are socially clean(except those above). Hands must be washed with soap and water when hands become sticky after repeated alcohol hand rub use.

Hand disinfectants

Hand disinfectants containing skin disinfectants i.e. Chlorhexidine, Triclosan or Povidone-Iodine are not used for routine clinical hand hygiene and should be reserved for surgical scrub, highly invasive procedures or on the advice of the Infection Control Team.

Patient hand hygiene

Patients should be encouraged, as a minimum, to wash their hands after toileting and before food/drinks.



3. Effective hand hygiene

The technique used for hand hygiene is very important and all surfaces of the hands must be covered. The areas most commonly missed are thumbs, backs of hands, between the fingers and finger tips.

Preparing yourself for hand hygiene

To properly and safely clean your hands, the following **must** be followed:

- Nails must be kept short - the majority of organisms are found under or around fingernails

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- The use of nail polish is not permitted
- Cuts or abrasions to the hands must be covered with a waterproof occlusive dressing, which should be replaced when necessary
- Rings with stones and wrist watches/jewellery must not be worn in clinical areas - these can harbour microorganisms. Only a single plain band is permitted
- Clinical staff should be 'Bare Below the Elbows' to ensure hands are not obscured allowing good hand hygiene to be undertaken. Long sleeves will prevent adequate hand hygiene. Short sleeves must be worn during clinical practice*

Preparing the clinical environment for effective hand hygiene

The following facilities **must** be in place to enable effective hand hygiene:

- Wash hand basins – these must be used only for hand hygiene and must be clean, uncluttered, accessible and stocked with liquid/bar soap.
- Alcohol hand rub dispensers – these must be available at the point of care. In addition, staff can carry personal dispensers

How to wash with soap and water

- Wet hands
- Apply sufficient soap to create a lather
- Use recommended procedure as given in Figure 2 & Appendix 2
- Rinse thoroughly
- Dry thoroughly without rubbing.

How to clean with alcohol hand rub

- Apply 1-2 shots of alcohol gel to the hands
- Use the recommended procedure as in Figure 2 and Appendix 3
- Continue rubbing until hands are completely dry and the hand rub has been absorbed



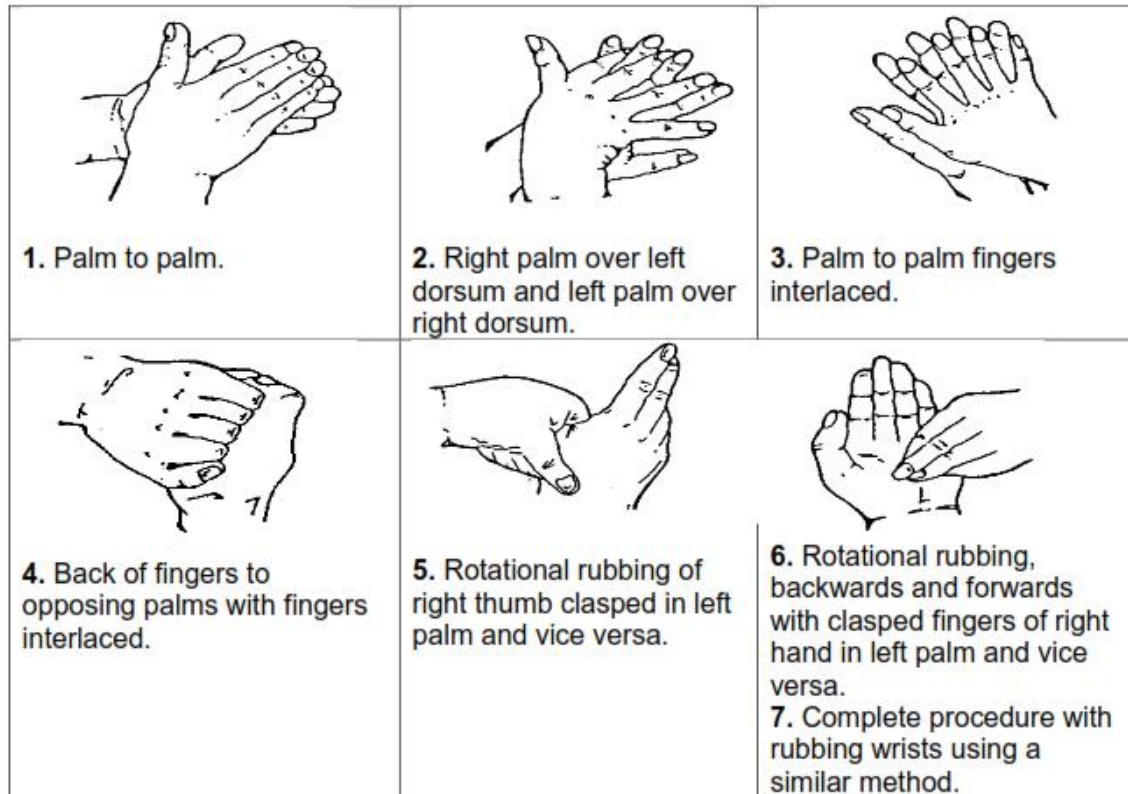
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Figure 2 – Hand Hygiene Technique (WHO, 2006b)





How to Care for Your Hands?

In addition to following the procedures given above, regular use of hand moisturisers will protect hands from dryness.

4. Outbreaks of infection

During an outbreak, the Infection Control Team may advise on the most appropriate agent to be used for hand decontamination.

Alcohol hand rub disinfection is not recommended during outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis or for *Clostridium difficile* infections. Soap and water hand washing should be used in these circumstances. The most effective hand hygiene can be achieved by washing with soap and warm water, drying thoroughly, followed by the use of alcohol hand rub.

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5. Gloves

Use of gloves



Gloves are never an alternative to hand hygiene. Hands must be cleaned before patient contact even if gloves are worn.

Alcohol hand rub should not normally be used on gloved hands.

Gloves play an important role in minimizing the risk of infection and should be worn for the protection of patients and professionals. However, gloves should only be worn when necessary to reduce the risk of sensitization. Gloves are single use items and should be disposed of as clinical waste.

Glove removal

- Hands must always be cleaned after glove removal (see Figure 2). To remove gloves without further contamination of hands:
- Grasp the outside of the glove with the opposite gloved hand. Peel glove off
- Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand
- Slide the fingers of the ungloved hand under the remaining glove at the wrist
- Peel the second glove off over the first glove
- Discard into the clinical waste

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World Health Organization. (2006b). *How to handrub: How to handwash.*

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Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will ensure that the Senior doctors/consultants take clinical ownership of the policy.



The NWGH Manager of Nursing will ensure that all health care workers comply with this policy.

The Infection Control Team will:

- act as a resource for information and support
- provide education and awareness campaigns in relation to this policy
- monitor the implementation of this policy within clinical areas
- regularly review and update the policy

All Alliance Healthcare staff will:

- comply with the hand hygiene policy
- inform the infection control team about any issues or concerns relating to hand hygiene
- know how and when to clean their hands
- encourage visitors to wash their hands on entering or leaving the ward and whenever deemed appropriate
- Assist patients with their hand hygiene as required and encourage hand hygiene after toileting and before food/drinks
- take part in hand hygiene audits within their own clinical/work areas (Appendix 4)

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Appendix 1: WHO 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene

The World Health Organisation have developed an approach called the 5 moments for hand hygiene. The Five Moments of hand hygiene is based around preventing the transfer of micro-organisms between each patient zone e.g. the zone around a patients bed or chair and lists the important times during our work, where we should stop to clean our hands. The 5 moments is applicable in all healthcare environments.



The Five Moments apply in all types of healthcare buildings not just hospitals



Appendix 2: Hand Washing Technique with Soap and water



Wet hands with water



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces



Rub hands palm to palm



Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced



Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



Rub with back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement



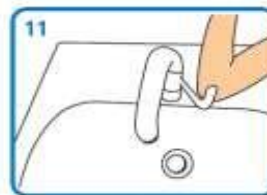
Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion



Rub each wrist with opposite hand



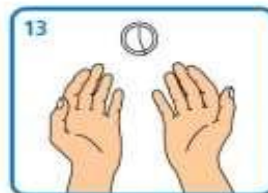
Rinse hands with water





Use elbow to turn off tap



Dry thoroughly with a single-use towel



Hand washing should take 15–30 seconds

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Appendix 3: Hand Hygiene Technique with Alcohol-Based Formulations

Hand Hygiene Technique with Alcohol-Based Formulation

 **Duration of the entire procedure: 20-30 seconds**

1a



Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand, covering all surfaces;

1b



Rub hands palm to palm;

2



Rub hands palm to palm;

3



Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;

4



Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;

5



Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;

6



Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;

7





Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;

8



Once dry, your hands are safe.

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Appendix 4: Hand hygiene audit tool

Opportunity Number	Ward	Staff Code	Key Moment	Hand Hygiene	Correct Procedure	If incorrect Why?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Staff Code: Employee code