



Fact Sheet 1

The Need for Better Hand Hygiene

- In Canada, healthcare associated infections (HCAI's) affect more than 220,000 people every year and kill 8,000 - 12,000.¹
- Hand hygiene, a very simple action, remains the primary means to reduce HCAI's and the spread of antimicrobial resistant organisms.
- HCAI's lead to long-term disability, preventable deaths, and additional financial burden on the healthcare system.²
- Compliance by healthcare workers with optimal hand hygiene is considered to be less than 40%.³
- Global research indicates that improvements in hand hygiene activities could potentially reduce HCAI rates by up to 50%!^{4, 5}
- A study in Geneva, Switzerland found that the introduction of alcohol based hand rub increased hand hygiene compliance from 48% to 66% over 5 years, during which time HCAI rates fell by about 40%.⁴
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends using an alcohol-based hand rub for routine antisepsis in most clinical situations where hands are not visibly soiled.
- Proper hand hygiene, when demonstrated by leaders, has been shown to positively influence the compliance of others by up to 70%.⁶

¹ Zoutman, Dick, MD, FRCPC, B. Douglas Ford, MA, Elizabeth Bryce, MD, Marie Gourdeau, MD, Ginette Hébert, RN, Elizabeth Henderson, PhD, and Shirley Paton, MN, Canadian Hospital Epidemiology Committee, Canadian Nosocomial Infection Surveillance Program and Health Canada « *The state of infection surveillance and control in Canadian acute care hospitals* »

² Backman, Chantal, RN, BScN, MHA "Patient Safety: It's in your hands!" PowerPoint presentation, slide 15.

³ Gautham Suresh, M.D., D.M., M.S., Cahill, John, M.D., "National Patient Safety Goals. How 'User Friendly' is the Hospital for Practicing Hand Hygiene?: An Ergonomic Evaluation." The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety 33. 3 (March 2004) : 1.

⁴ Pittet D, Hugonnet S, Harbarth S, Mourouga P, Sauvan V, Touveneau S, Perneger TV. *Effectiveness of a hospital-wide programme to improve compliance with hand hygiene. Infection Control Programme.* Lancet 2000 Oct 14;356(9238):1307-12. [Pittet et al (2000); Larson (2004)]

⁵ Patient Safety and Hand Hygiene Matter! – CPSW Week 2006 brochure

⁶ Roth, Virginia, MD, FRCPC "Hands that harm, hands that heal", November 2006 Powerpoint presentation, slide 33