



Fact Sheet 4

Proper Hand Hygiene Technique

Why?

- In Canada, healthcare acquired infections (HCAIs) affect more than 220,000 individuals and kill 8,000 - 12,000 every year.¹
- Hands are the most common means of microbial spread in healthcare.
- Optimal hand hygiene activities are therefore the most important measures to reduce the occurrence of healthcare associated infections (HCAI).

When?

- There are some key moments for hand hygiene:
 1. Before patient/patient environment contact
 2. Before aseptic procedure
 3. After body fluid exposure risk
 4. After patient/patient environment contact

Where?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that hand hygiene should be performed at the point of care.

How?

- Clean your hands by rubbing them with an alcohol-based formulation when available.
- Alcohol based Hand Rubs are faster, more effective, and better tolerated by your hands than washing with soap and water.²
- Wash your hands with soap and water only when hands are visibly soiled and whenever an alcohol-based formulation is not available.²
- Washing hands with soap and water immediately before or after using an alcohol-based hand rub is not recommended as this may predispose the individual to developing contact dermatitis.²
- If isolation precautions are in place, always adhere to the hand hygiene directions appropriate to those precautions. Never default to hand rubs where isolation precautions are in place unless the precautions specify that this is acceptable.
- The act of thorough and vigorous drying is an important measure that helps to eliminate pathogens from your hands.
- For more information, go to:
 - STOP! Clean Your Hands website www.handhygiene.ca
 - Updated 2009 WHO guidelines full version: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241597906_eng.pdf
 - Updated 2009 WHO guidelines summary version: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2009/WHO_IER_PSP_2009.07_eng.pdf

1. Zoutman, D., Ford, D., Bryce, E., Gourdeau, M., Hebert, G., Henderson, E., and Paton, S. 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. "WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (Updated 2009)" http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241597906_eng.pdf

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