



# Safety Information

SI: 002/09

3 February 2009

- This Safety Information provides advice on hand hygiene for all staff working in healthcare facilities
- All staff must perform hand hygiene at the appropriate moments to reduce infections

#### Distributed to:

- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Governance
- Directors of Clinical Operations

#### We recommend you also inform:

- All Area Health Service Staff

#### Expert Reference Group

Content reviewed by:

- HAI Steering Committee
- HAI Expert Advisory Group
- Clinical Excellence Commission

#### Quality and Safety Branch

NSW Department of Health

Tel. 02 9391 9200

Fax. 02 93919556

Email

[quality@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:quality@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)

Website

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html)

## Hand Hygiene

Hands can carry micro-organisms that cause infection. Hand hygiene is the single most important practice to reduce the transmission of infectious agents in healthcare settings. There is good evidence that demonstrates a definite link between hand hygiene and the reduction of healthcare associated infections.

All staff must perform hand hygiene at the appropriate moments.

The term "hand hygiene" refers to hand cleansing with:

- alcohol-based hand rubs, or
- running water and plain or antimicrobial-containing liquid soap

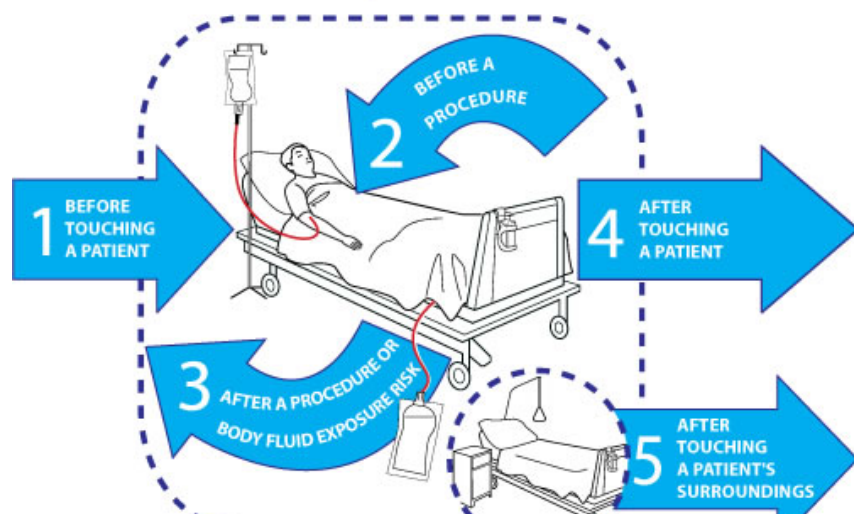
It is preferable to use an alcohol-based hand rub to clean hands before and after touching a patient if the hands are not visibly soiled.

However, hands must be cleaned with soap and running water if the hands are visibly soiled or where alcohol-based hand rubs have proven to be inadequate, for example, when caring for patients with *Clostridium difficile*.

The reason for giving preference to alcohol-based hand rubs for routine use on non-soiled hands is because it is more effective, quicker to use, better tolerated by the hands and can be provided at the point of care.

This advice applies to all staff groups including visiting practitioners, medical practitioners, nurses, allied health staff, environmental services staff, wardspersons, students, volunteers, administration and management, who must comply with hand hygiene practices.

### Your 5 moments for hand hygiene at the point of care



#### Recommended actions by Area Health Services

1. Forward information to appropriate area for action.
2. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken.



3 February 2009

# Hand Hygiene

## When to perform hand hygiene – the 5 moments

You **must** perform hand hygiene in the following situations:

### 1. Before touching a patient

**When?** Clean your hands before touching a patient and their immediate surroundings

**Why?** To protect the patient against acquiring harmful micro-organisms from the hands of the healthcare worker

### 2. Before a procedure

**When?** Clean your hands immediately before a procedure

**Why?** To protect the patient from harmful micro-organisms (including their own) from entering their body during a procedure

### 3. After a procedure or body fluid exposure risk

**When?** Clean your hands immediately after performing a procedure or body fluid exposure risk

**Why?** To protect the healthcare worker and the healthcare surroundings from harmful patient micro-organisms

### 4. After touching a patient.

**When?** Clean your hands after touching a patient and their immediate surroundings

**Why?** To protect the healthcare worker and the healthcare surroundings from harmful patient micro-organisms

### 5. After touching a patient's surroundings.

**When?** Clean your hands after touching any objects in a patient's immediate surroundings when the patient has not been touched

**Why?** To protect the healthcare worker and the healthcare surroundings from harmful patient micro-organisms

### Glove use and hand hygiene

Wearing gloves does not eliminate the need for hand hygiene. Hand hygiene must be performed before putting on gloves and immediately after removing gloves

### Promoting patient and visitor hand hygiene

Patients should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene:

- before eating
- after going to the toilet or using a bedpan or urinal
- whenever hands are visibly soiled
- after sneezing or coughing into hands

Visitors, such as a relative or friend, who assist a patient should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene when they enter or leave each ward.

### Additional information

[Infection Control Policy Directive PD PD2007\\_036, NSW Department of Health, 2007](#)

[Safety Information SI001/07 Alcohol Based Hand Cleansers and Fire, NSW Department of Health, 27 June 2007](#)

Hand Hygiene Australia <http://www.hha.org.au>

World Alliance for Patient Safety. [WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Healthcare \(Advanced Draft\): Global patient safety challenge 2005-2006: Clean care is safer care.](#) World Health Organisation: 2005