



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOOD HAND HYGIENE SAVES LIVES

Health Minister Jillian Skinner today marked World Hand Hygiene Day by launching the NSW Government's *Clean In, Clean Out* initiative.

Mrs Skinner was joined by Member for Coogee Bruce Notley-Smith at Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick to launch the program.

NSW has the highest reported average hand hygiene rates among clinicians in Australia - 81% compared to the national average of 79%.

The Sydney Children's Hospital Network - comprising Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick and the Children's Hospital at Westmead - leads the state in hand hygiene with a rate of 85%.

"The World Health Organisation (WHO) is leading a major global effort to prevent the spread of avoidable infection," Mrs Skinner said.

"The NSW Government's Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) is working with public hospitals across NSW to drive improvement in hand hygiene.

"Improving hand hygiene among doctors, in particular, and other health care workers is currently the single most effective intervention to reduce the risk of hospital-acquired infections in NSW hospitals."

Hand hygiene describes washing or decontaminating hands. Washing hands physically removes germs by friction and washes them away. Decontaminating hands reduces the amount of germs present on hands through the use of special alcohol based preparations, in the form of solutions, gels or foams.

The CEC has developed the *Clean In, Clean Out* campaign to remind doctors and other clinicians to clean their hands before and after patient contact.

The campaign is focused on those doctors who make medical rounds of wards or undertake patient consultations, rather than surgical or trauma staff who must adhere to very strict hygiene protocols.

CEC chief executive Professor Cliff Hughes said clinical leaders have a vital role to play in preventing infection and the spread of disease in hospitals.

“Posters featuring the tag line ‘Lead the Way: Be the First to Make a Difference’ have been designed for medical rounds, where the evidence shows that if the first person approaching a patient follows good hand hygiene then the rest follow,” Professor Hughes said.

A new patient information pamphlet has also been developed to remind patients - and their visitors - that they can ensure hand hygiene by using the wash basins and antiseptic gel dispensers which are widely available in hospitals.

The CEC currently supports and promotes the Five Moments for Hand Hygiene, which was developed by the WHO. The five moments are:

- 1: Before touching the patient
- 2: Before performing an aseptic procedure
- 3: After a procedure or a body fluid exposure risk
- 4: After touching the patient
- 5: After touching the patient’s surrounds

Mrs Skinner said hand hygiene compliance data is collected from every NSW public hospital three times a year.

“The need for good hand hygiene in hospitals may seem self-evident but we know that busy doctors and distracted patients and visitors can overlook it,” she said.

“Today is a day to remember that clean hand can save lives. It’s a simple message but a vital one.”