

Hand Hygiene Guideline Fact Sheet

1. **Why is Hand Hygiene Important?** - Improved adherence to hand hygiene (i.e. hand washing or appropriate use of alcohol-based hand rubs) has been shown to reduce disease transmission, terminate outbreaks in health care facilities, reduce transmission of antimicrobial resistant organisms (e.g. methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus) and reduce overall infection rates. In addition to traditional hand washing with soap and water, we recommend the use of alcohol-based hand rubs by health care personnel for patient care because they address some of the obstacles that health care professionals face when taking care of patients. Hand washing with soap and water remains the sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-health care settings.
2. **When and How Should Hands be Washed?**
 - a. When health care personnel's hands are visibly soiled, they should wash with soap and water. The use of gloves does not eliminate the need for hand hygiene. Likewise, the use of hand hygiene does not eliminate the need for gloves. Gloves reduce hand contamination by 70% to 80%, prevent cross-contamination and protect patients and health care personnel from infection. Hand hygiene should be performed before and after putting on gloves; gloves should be changed before and after each patient and after touching hospital surfaces or changing dressings or bandages.
 - b. When using an alcohol-based hand rub, apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until hands are dry. Follow directions on the bottle for how much product to use. Alcohol-based hand rubs (which should contain 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol alcohol) significantly reduce the number of microorganisms on skin, are fast acting and cause less skin irritation.
3. **What other hand hygiene facts are important to know?**
 - a. Health care personnel should avoid wearing artificial nails and keep natural nails less than one quarter of an inch long if they care for patients at high risk of acquiring infections (e.g. Patients in intensive care units or in transplant units).
 - b. Allergic contact dermatitis due to alcohol hand rubs is very uncommon. However, with increasing use of such products by health care personnel, it is likely that true allergic reactions to such products will occasionally be encountered.
 - c. Alcohol-based hand rubs take less time to use than traditional hand washing. In an eight-hour shift, one hour of a nurse's time is saved by using an alcohol-based hand-rub.
4. **For more information about Hand Hygiene:** <http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/>



How-to Guide for Hand Washing:

http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandWash_Poster.pdf

How-to Guide for Hand Rub:

http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandRub_Poster.pdf

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information related to you.