Clean Hands Count for Safe Healthcare

Clean hands can protect you from serious infections while you are a patient in a healthcare facility.

What's The Problem?

Most germs that cause serious infections in healthcare are spread by people's actions. [Hand hygiene](#) is a great way to prevent infections. However, studies show that on average, healthcare providers clean their hands less than half of the times they should. This contributes to the spread of [healthcare-associated infections](#) that affect 1 in 25 hospital patients on any given day. Every patient is at risk of getting an infection while they are being treated for something else. Even healthcare providers are at risk of getting an infection while they are treating patients. Preventing the spread of germs is especially important in hospitals and other facilities such as dialysis centers and nursing homes.

The Clean Hands Count Campaign

CDC's Clean Hands Count campaign aims to improve healthcare provider adherence to hand hygiene recommendations, address myths and misperceptions about hand hygiene, and empower patients to play a role in their care by asking or reminding healthcare providers to clean their hands.

- Healthcare providers might need to clean their hands as many as 100 times per 12-hour shift, depending on the number of patients and intensity of care.

- Everyone should know the truth about hand hygiene and alcohol-based hand sanitizer:
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer kills most of the bad germs that make you sick and is the preferred way to clean your hands in healthcare settings.
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer does not kill *C. difficile*, a common healthcare-associated infection that causes severe diarrhea. Patients with *C. difficile* should wash their hands with soap and water and make sure their healthcare providers always wear gloves when caring for them.
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is more effective and less drying than using soap and water, and does not create antibiotic-resistant superbugs.
- Hand hygiene should be a topic of conversation between healthcare providers and patients. Healthcare providers can explain how and why they clean their hands before, after, and sometimes during patient care, and let patients know it's ok to ask about hand hygiene.
- Patients and their visitors can protect themselves by cleaning their own hands often.

What Can Patients Do?

Clean your own hands and ask your visitors to clean theirs too.

PROTECT YOURSELF BY CLEANING YOUR HANDS OFTEN

Germs that cause serious infections are in healthcare facilities.

When you are a patient or visitor, you might get bad germs on your hands from things you touch. Clean your hands often to get rid of these bad germs.

ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITIZER is the preferred way to clean your hands. It kills the bad germs while the good germs quickly grow back on your skin.

WHEN TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS:

AFTER TOUCHING BED RAILS, BEDSIDE TABLES, REMOTE CONTROLS, OR PHONE

AFTER TOUCHING DOORKNOBS

AFTER USING RESTROOM
(Use soap and water)

BEFORE TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, OR MOUTH

BEFORE EATING
(Use soap and water)

BEFORE AND AFTER CHANGING BANDAGES

AFTER BLOWING YOUR NOSE, COUGHING, OR SNEEZING

#CleanHandsCount
for everyone

CLEAN HANDS COUNT

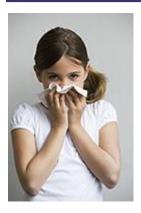## What Can Healthcare Providers Do?

Healthcare providers should clean their hands before and after every patient contact to protect themselves as well as their patients from infections.

When using alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

PUT PRODUCT ON HANDS AND RUB HANDS TOGETHER

COVER ALL SURFACES UNTIL HANDS FEEL DRY

THIS SHOULD TAKE AROUND 20 SECONDS

When & How to Wash Your Hands

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. If clean, running water is not accessible, as is common in many parts of the world, use soap and available water. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

How should you wash your hands?

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

What should you do if you don't have soap and clean, running water?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs and might not remove harmful chemicals.

Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

How do you use hand sanitizers?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.