

Hand Hygiene

What is hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene is removing dirt and germs from your hands by cleaning your hands with soap and water or killing germs on your hands by using an antiseptic such as alcohol hand gel.

Why is hand hygiene important?

The most common way to spread germs from person to person is on the hands. Performing hand hygiene removes or kills germs before they can be spread to someone else and helps prevent infections caused by germs.

When should I do hand hygiene?

You should do hand hygiene often, including:

- Before eating
- After using the restroom
- Before leaving your room
- After touching surfaces or medical equipment
- After taking off gloves or a gown

How to wash your hands with soap and water:

Always use soap and water to clean your hands if they are visibly dirty.

1. **Wet** your hands with running water.
2. **Apply** soap and rub it over all parts of your hands and nails for 20 seconds.
3. **Rinse** off the soap with water and keep your fingers pointing down.
4. **Dry** your hands with a paper towel.

5. **Use** paper towel to turn off the faucet so your hands do not get dirty again.

How to use alcohol hand gel:

Use alcohol hand gel to clean your hands when they are not visibly dirty.

1. **Squirt** two pumps of gel into the palm of one hand.
2. **Rub** the gel over all parts of your hands and nails for 20 seconds or until it dries.

When will my health care staff do hand hygiene?

Staff will do hand hygiene often when taking care of you, including:

- Before and after caring for you
- After taking off gloves, gowns, or masks
- After leaving your room

Be informed. Be empowered. Be prepared.

Speak up. Ask your health care team if they have performed hand hygiene. Ask your family members and visitors to do the same with either soap and water or two pumps of alcohol hand gel.

Questions?

Ask your nurse, doctor, or call the Hospital Epidemiology Service at 301-496-2209.

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