

Title: Hand Hygiene Policy

Policy No.: 1.4.4

Revised Date: 03/10

From: Infection Prevention

Reviewed Date: 03/10

Reviewed by: Infection Prevention Committee

PURPOSE

To provide healthcare workers (HCW's) with guidelines for hand hygiene throughout the continuum of healthcare, thus reducing the risk of transmitting organisms that cause infection and illness.

RATIONALE

Hand hygiene has long been recognized as the single most important means of reducing the risk of transmitting microorganisms that can cause infection or illness. Guidelines have been developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other professional infection control organizations to direct healthcare workers in consistent and thorough hand hygiene. Research has also shown the benefits of reduced colony counts of microorganisms on hands and improved skin condition of hands of HCW's when an alcohol based waterless hand cleaner with emollients is used in conjunction with washing hands with soap and water.

RESPONSIBILITY

Staff – is responsible for knowledge of and adherence to hand hygiene guidelines/policy.

Leadership - is responsible for implementing processes to monitor and enforce compliance.

Infection Prevention – is responsible for 1) Writing and reviewing policy according to current guidelines, 2) Developing tools and processes to monitor compliance, 3) Developing plans to educate healthcare workers and 4) Reporting compliance data to units/departments, Patient Safety, Quality Council and Infection Prevention Committees.

Guidelines

I. Wash hands with antimicrobial soap and water for the following circumstances:

- A. When hands are visibly dirty or contaminated with a proteinaceous substance such as blood, feces or other body fluids.
- B. When exposure to *Clostridium difficile* (C-diff) or *Bacillus anthracis* is suspected or proven. (The physical action of washing and rinsing hands under such circumstances is recommended to remove the bacterial spores).
- C. Before eating.
- D. After using the restroom.

II. Perform hand hygiene with antimicrobial soap and water or waterless, alcohol-based hand rub for the following circumstances:

- A. Before having direct contact with patients.
- B. After contact with a patient's intact skin (e.g., when taking a pulse or blood pressure, and lifting a patient).
- C. Before inserting indwelling urinary catheters, peripheral vascular catheters, or other invasive devices that do not require a surgical procedure.
- D. Before donning sterile gloves when inserting a central intravascular catheter.
- E. When moving from a contaminated-body site to a clean-body site during patient care.
- F. After contact with inanimate objects (including medical equipment) in the immediate vicinity of the patient.
- G. After contact with body fluids or excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, and wound dressings if hands are not visibly soiled.
- H. After removal of gloves.

III. How to Wash Hands:

- A. Wet hands with water. (Avoid using hot water, because repeated exposure to hot water may increase the risk of dermatitis).
- B. Apply antimicrobial soap.
- C. Rub hands together vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers.
- D. Rinse hands with water.
- E. Dry thoroughly with a disposable towel.
- F. Use towel to turn off the faucet.
- G. Discard paper towel in waste receptacle.

IV. How to use waterless, alcohol-based hand rub:

- A. Apply product to palm of one hand. (Apply enough alcohol-based rub to cover entire surface of hands and fingers).
- B. Rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until hands are dry.

V. Surgical hand antisepsis:

- A. Remove rings, watches, and bracelets before beginning the surgical hand scrub.
- B. Remove debris from underneath fingernails using a nail cleaner under running water.
- C. Surgical hand antisepsis using either an antimicrobial soap or an alcohol-based hand rub with persistent activity is recommended before donning sterile gloves when performing surgical procedures.
- D. When performing surgical hand antisepsis using an antimicrobial soap, scrub hands and forearms for the length of time recommended by the manufacturer. Long scrub times (e.g., 10 minutes) are not necessary.
- E. When using an alcohol-based surgical hand-scrub product with persistent activity, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Before applying the alcohol solution, prewash hands and forearms with antimicrobial soap and dry hands and forearms completely. After application of the alcohol-based product as recommended, allow hands and forearms to dry thoroughly before donning sterile gloves.

VI. Any artificial fingernails or extenders of a direct caregiver are strictly prohibited. See Artificial/Long Nail Policy (1.4.28) for details.

References:

Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings, Recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee and the HICPAC/SHEA/APIC/IDSA Hand Hygiene Task Force, MMWR, Vol. 51/RR-16, October 25, 2002.