

Guidelines for Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most effective way of preventing the transmission of healthcare-associated infection (HAI) to patients, staff, and visitors in all healthcare settings³. Effective hand hygiene programs include proper training and education on policies, procedures, and practices that are reviewed on a regular basis.

■ Hand hygiene is performed in accordance with the 4 Moments of Hand Hygiene:

- 1.) before contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. donning personal protective equipment (PPE), entering an examination room, providing patient care);
- 2.) before a clean or aseptic procedure (e.g. wound care, handling intravenous devices, handling food, preparing medications);
- 3.) after exposure or risk of exposure to blood and/or body fluids (e.g. hands visibly soiled, after removal of gloves); and
- 4.) after contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. doffing PPE, leaving examination room, after handling patient care equipment).

■ Appropriate products are selected and used for hand hygiene:

- Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) containing 60-90% alcohol are used for performing hand hygiene, except in situations described below.
- Plain soap and water are used
 - when hands are visibly soiled with food, dirt, blood, body fluids and/or a buildup of ABHR,
 - during food preparation, or
 - following glove removal when providing care for patients with diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- Antimicrobial (antiseptic) soap is only used in limited circumstances, such as before aseptic procedures, and is not used for routine hand hygiene.
- Hand cleaning wipes/towelettes are only used for hand cleaning in exceptional circumstances when sinks and running water are not available; hand hygiene using ABHR must be done following use of hand cleaning wipes/towelettes.
- If hand lotions are used, they are compatible with hand hygiene products selected.

■ ABHR is used in accordance with the following procedure:

- hands are not visibly soiled and are dry before use;
- enough ABHR is applied to ensure coverage of all hand surfaces;
- product is vigorously rubbed over all surfaces of the hands and wrists, including: palms, space between fingers, back of hands and wrists, fingers, fingertips, and thumbs;
- hands remain wet for a minimum of 15 seconds; and
- hands are rubbed until completely dry.

■ **Soap and water are used in accordance with the following procedure:**

- hands are wet with warm water and enough soap is applied to ensure lathering of all hand surfaces;
- hands are vigorously rubbed over all surfaces of the hands and wrists, including: palms, space between fingers, back of hands and wrists, fingers, fingertips, and thumbs;
- hands are rubbed for a minimum of 15 seconds;
- hands are rinsed under warm, running water;
- hands are dried with disposable paper towels;
- hands are not re-contaminated after washing (i.e. faucet is turned off and doors are opened with paper towel); and
- paper towels are discarded in a waste receptacle.

■ **Hand hygiene is supported by adequate infrastructure:**

- Hand hygiene products are as close as possible to the point of care.
- Wall-mounted ABHR dispensers are installed in appropriate designated areas away from sinks and in accordance with the Alberta Fire Code. Areas include, but are not limited to
 - examination rooms
 - public areas (e.g. building entrance/exits)
 - nursing stations
 - medication carts
 - staff rooms
 - computer stations
 - medical device reprocessing areas, and
 - clinical and medication preparation areas without sinks.
- Hand hygiene products are not used past expiry. Date of expiration is visible on product containers.
- Sinks dedicated for hand hygiene are not used for other purposes (e.g. equipment cleaning, waste disposal, food preparation).
- Hand hygiene products are available for patients and visitors.

■ **Employees that cannot perform adequate hand hygiene do not perform tasks that require hand hygiene:**

- Employees that cannot perform adequate hand hygiene include, but is not limited to individuals
 - wearing casts, dressings, and/or splints;
 - wearing artificial nails, nail enhancements, and/or chipped nail polish;
 - wearing hand jewellery other than a simple ring (i.e. band); or
 - experiencing hand sensitivity reactions (e.g. dermatitis).
- Tasks that require hand hygiene include, but are not limited to
 - providing patient care,
 - reprocessing or handling surgical linens and/or medical devices,

- preparing pharmaceuticals or medications, and
- handling food.
- **Hand hygiene training and education is provided to new employees during orientation and ongoing thereafter.**

References

Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention & Control. 2011. Hand Hygiene Policy PS-02.
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