

Hand hygiene information for patients and visitors

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the general term that refers to the action of hand cleansing. As hands are known to be the main pathways of germ transmission, the most important measure to avoid the transmission of harmful germs and prevent healthcare-associated infections is hand hygiene.

Why is cleaning your hand important?

Effective hand hygiene is the most effective way to reduce the spread of infections. Germs are often harmless but they can also cause illnesses such as colds, tummy bugs as well as a more serious illness.

When should I clean my hands?

- When hands are visibly dirty
- Before and after visiting patients, a hospital ward or department
- Before eating or handling food (wipes are available at every meal service, you may be prompted to use the wipes by staff)
- After using a toilet, commode or changing a nappy
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or handling tissues.

<p>What should I clean my hands with?</p>	 <p>Warm running water and soap</p>	 <p>Hand Sanitiser</p>
 <p>When hands are dirty</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✗</p>
 <p>Before eating or handling food (wipes are available for use by patients prior to every meal service)</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✗</p>
 <p>After coughs, sneezes and handling tissues</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✗</p>
 <p>After using a toilet, commode, or changing a nappy</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✗</p>
 <p>When visiting patients, or attending a medical appointment</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>

How do I wash my hands properly?

Follow these simple steps given by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2009) to wash away those germs and clean your hands:

- Turn on the tap and wet both hands with warm running water
- Apply one pump of handwash from the hand wash dispenser, then :



1. Rub hands palm to palm



2. Right palm over back of left hand with interlaced fingers and vice versa



3. Palm to palm with fingers interlaced



4. Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



5. Rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm and vice versa



6. Rotational rubbing backwards and forwards of right hand in left palm and vice versa

- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Dry thoroughly using the hand paper towels provided and dispose of in a black bin
- Use paper towel to turn off tap.

Remember that hand washing, with water and liquid soap, is necessary in all circumstances where there have been cases of vomiting and diarrhoea. Areas frequently missed include the tips of the fingers, palms of your hands and thumbs.

Why and how do I use alcohol hand foam sanitiser?

Hand hygiene needs to take place immediately before entering each clinical area as well as before contact with patients. Foam sanitiser is available at the entrance to all clinical areas and at each patient bedside for use at the point of care. It is not provided at the main reception as it is not a point of care, this also reduces the risk of accidental ingestion.

To use the foam sanitiser apply one squirt of hand foam into the palm of your visibly clean hand and rub your hands together vigorously, using the same technique in the pictures above, until your hands are dry (takes 20-30 seconds).

Can I ask staff to wash their hands?

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust is committed to providing you with excellent care within a safe environment. Hand hygiene is taken very seriously. If you are worried that staff have not performed hand hygiene please do remind them.

A “bare below the elbow” policy has been introduced across the trust for all clinical staff who are in contact with patients. You can expect staff to practise hand hygiene:

- At the beginning of every shift
- Between every patient contact
- Before contact with patient wounds or any medical device
- Before handling medicines or food
- After assisting patients to use a toilet or commode
- After removal of gloves.

What else can I do to help prevent the spread of infection?

- Keep patients safe. We would recommend that visitors remain at home if experiencing any vomiting or diarrhoea until 48 hours free of symptoms
- Wash and dry your hands before visiting a hospital ward or department. Alcohol foam sanitiser is provided at the entrance to all clinical areas, for your use.
- Ask ward staff for advice **before** bringing in food or drink for someone you are visiting
- Avoid sitting on a patients bed and where possible no more than 2 visitors at a time
- Keep bed spaces “clutter free”
- If you think the area you have visited is not clean or a member staff has forgotten to clean their hands, please remind them or speak to the staff member.

The infection control team are always interested in new or innovative ways to promote hand hygiene. If you have any comments, queries, suggestions or questions not answered in this leaflet please do not hesitate to contact the infection control team through the hospital switchboard.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

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The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
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The clinical group that have agreed this patient information leaflet: Infection Control

Date agreed:	August 2018/June 2014
Review date:	June 2017
Responsible clinician/author:	Tina Lloyd, Assistant Director of Infection Prevention and Control

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