# A guide to achieving good hand hygiene

Issued by the Infection Control Team

# Help us to protect you through hand hygiene

At Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust we are determined to minimise the risk of infection and that is why we ask all our staff, patients and visitors to observe good hand hygiene at all times. All our staff take infection prevention and control very seriously and we are committed to keeping you, our patients, as safe and healthy as possible.

## What causes infections?

Infections can be caused by viruses, but mostly by 'bugs' or germs called bacteria that occur naturally all around us. They also live on our skin, and in our mouths and noses. Most of them don't do us any harm. However when we are unwell or frail, due to illness or after an operation, our bodies' natural defences are weakened, so more care is needed to protect us.

## Why is hand hygiene important?

Good hand hygiene is one of the most simple and effective ways of preventing the spread of many infections such as MRSA (Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus), Covid-19, Clostridioides difficile and bugs that cause diarrhoea and vomiting.

Remember, even if your hands look clean, they can still carry germs which are invisible to the naked eye. Some are always present and cause us no harm; others can cause us to be ill with stomach upsets, cold and flu or potentially more serious illnesses. Washing your hands properly with soap and water will remove these germs and is an important and simple way to protect you, your family and others, from becoming ill.

# There are two main ways to clean hands:

**Washing with soap and water** removes germs and is the technique that should be used when your hands are visibly dirty. Soap and water must be used following contact with vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

## Using hand sanitiser

Hand sanitisers kill ninety nine per cent of germs in around 30 seconds. They are a very convenient way to disinfect clean hands. You don't need to be near a sink to use them and the hand sanitiser dries naturally onto your skin in seconds.

You will find hand sanitiser dispensers at the entrance of our hospital wards and departments. Please use them when entering and leaving these areas. Dispensers can also be found at patient bedsides, please feel free to use them.

## When should I wash my hands?

You should make regular and thorough hand washing part of your daily routine.

## Wash your hands with soap and water:

- Whenever they are visibly dirty
- After using the toilet, commode, nappy changing or potties
- After contact with blood or bodily fluids
- Before and after handling any wounds or dressings
- When visiting a patient who has diarrhoea
- Before and after eating or handling food
- After blowing you nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching animals or animal waste

- After handling rubbish
- Before and after touching a sick or injured person
- Before entering and leaving a hospital or care home
- Before and after you enter GP surgeries or Clinics

## Use hand sanitiser even if your hands look clean:

- When entering and leaving the hospital
- When entering and leaving the ward

## How should I clean my hands?

It takes at least twenty seconds to wash your hands properly by following the technique below you will ensure no parts of your hands or wrists are missed out. You can use this technique using soap or the hand sanitiser. Do not assume children know how to wash their hands, encourage them by showing them how to do it.

When using the hand sanitiser apply 1-2 squirts on your hands, follow the technique above. Do not wash the sanitiser off; rub this onto your hands until completely dry.

Remember, hand sanitiser does not work against the germ called Clostridioides difficile, so hands should be washed with soap and water. Also at times of diarrhoea and vomiting Outbreaks we would ask that you take extra care with hand hygiene and wash your hands with soap and water before leaving the ward area.

# It's ok to ask

Our staff are trained to follow the information in this leaflet based on the recommendations for hand hygiene made by the World Health Organisation and the National Patient Safety Agency 'Clean Your Hands Campaign'.

- Hands must be cleaned between having contact with one patient or another

- Hands must be cleaned before and after wearing gloves

- Nails should be kept short and stoned or ridged rings or watches should not be worn by clinical staff

- Long sleeves must be rolled up when in clinical areas.

We take hand hygiene very seriously but sometimes when we're really busy we might not clean our hands as often as we should. So if you're worried that we've forgotten it's ok to remind us. We welcome your help in keeping you safe.

If you are unable to wash your hands as you are confined to bed, ask your healthcare provider for hand wipes, especially before meals and after using the toilet.

**It is everyone's responsibility - healthcare workers and the general public to be proactive in preventing the spread of infection**

Help to keep germs at bay by promoting good hand hygiene:

- Please tell the nearest member of staff if you come across empty hand hygiene dispensers

- Feel free to ask staff to use sanitiser on their hands before caring for you. If your don't feel comfortable doing this, ask to speak to a member of the PALS team, a modern matron, infection prevention control nurse or any member of staff and we will make sure this gets addressed.

## Contacts

If you require any further information or need to speak to someone you can contact either the hospital or community infection control teams on 0344 811 8111 or the PALS team (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 0800 032 0202.

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# Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

# Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
www.nice.org.uk

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Freephone: 0800 032 0202
Text: 07815 500015
Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111
www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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