

# Hand Hygiene: Help Prevent the Spread of Germs and Infections in the Hospital

## Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections. This includes the common cold, flu, and even hard-to-treat infections such as methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA).

- Infections you get in the hospital can be life-threatening and hard to treat.
- All patients are at risk for hospital infections.
- You can take action by asking both your health care providers and visitors to wash their hands.

## When to Practice Hand Hygiene

You should practice hand hygiene:

- before preparing or eating food
- before touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- before and after changing wound dressings or bandages
- after using the restroom or changing diapers
- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- after touching hospital surfaces such as bed rails, bedside tables, doorknobs, remote controls or the phone.



**It only takes 15 seconds of using either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub to remove the germs that cause infections.**

## How to Practice Hand Hygiene

There are 2 different ways to clean your hands.

### Soap and water

Use soap and water:

- when your hands look dirty
- if you have diarrhea or a stomach virus
- after you use the bathroom or change a diaper
- before you prepare and eat food.

You should use soap and water to clean your hands if you have diarrhea or you have been diagnosed with *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff).

*(over)*

## To wash your hands:

- Wet your hands with warm water and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather and then rub all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers and the area around and under your fingernails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for 15 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel. Then use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door, if needed.

## Alcohol-based hand rub

Use an alcohol-based hand rub:

- when your hands do not look dirty
- if soap and water are not available.

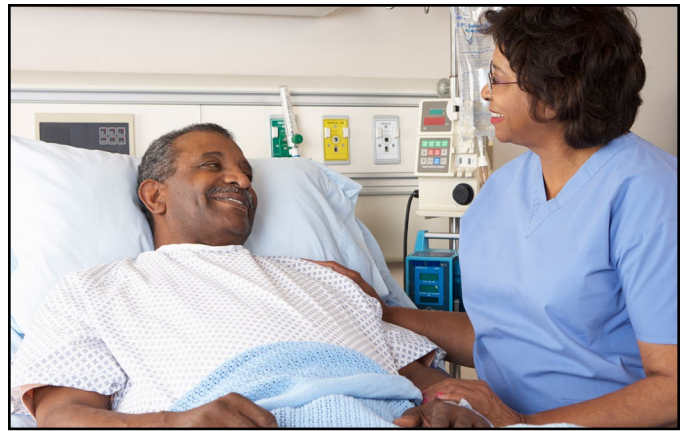
## To clean your hands:

- Follow directions on the bottle for how much of the product to use.
- Rub hands together and then rub product all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers and the area around and under your fingernails.
- Continue rubbing for 15 seconds until your hands are dry.

## Your Visitors

Your visitors should also practice hand hygiene:

- when entering and leaving your room
- after using the restroom or changing diapers
- before and after helping with or performing cares (such as bathing and grooming)
- before helping with meals.



**You, your visitors and your health care providers should practice hand hygiene.**

## Your Health Care Team

Your health care providers should practice hand hygiene:

- every time they enter your room
- before and after touching you
- before putting on gloves
- after removing gloves
- before and after touching lines, drains and devices.

## You Can Make a Difference in Your Own Health

Health care providers know they should practice hand hygiene, but they sometimes get distracted. Your friendly reminders are welcome.

**Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**