



IPC Matters

Infection Prevention and Control

World Hand Hygiene Day 5 May 2020

Since 2008, World Hand Hygiene Day has been celebrated annually on 5 May across the globe. It involves people coming together to share a simple message – wash or decontaminate your hands effectively to protect yourself and others and reduce the spread of harmful diseases and infections.

How things have changed

During sustained transmission of COVID-19 hand hygiene has become a normal part of daily life for most people, be it at work, at home or even visiting the supermarket. Social media is full of images and educational clips advocating good hand hygiene technique. We have seen supermarket shelves depleted of basic commodities such as hand wash soap, hand sanitisers, hand wipes, toilet roll and pasta(!) as people endeavour to keep themselves safe.

The rise of terms such as social distancing, self-isolation, shielding were not normal vocabulary for most of us a couple of months ago and do you even tweet if you don't include hashtags like **#StayHomeSaveLives** **#protecttheNHS** **#clapforcarers**. We are certainly living in strange times and the hand hygiene message is more important than ever as we continue to experience sustained transmission of the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 infection across the UK.

COVID-19 – what is it?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which can cause infections from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). In

December 2019 a new strain of Coronavirus now known as COVID-19 emerged and spread widely due to the lack of immunity in the population. One of the most effective ways to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 is by washing our hands.



However, stop for a moment and consider the following:

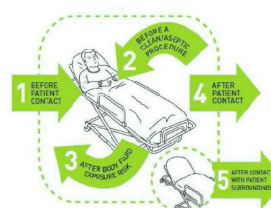
1. *When do you carry out hand hygiene (5 moments for hand hygiene)?*
2. *How effective is your hand hygiene technique?*
3. *Are you wearing disposable gloves appropriately?*

When do you carry out hand hygiene?

HSC Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Health and Social Care Trust



Your 5 moments for HAND HYGIENE



1 BEFORE PATIENT CONTACT	WHEN? Clean your hands before touching a patient, when approaching, transfer. WHY? To protect the patient against harmful germs carried on your hands.
2 BEFORE A CLEAN/ASEPTIC PROCEDURE	WHEN? Clean your hands immediately before any clean/aseptic procedure. WHY? To protect the patient against harmful germs, including the patient's own, from entering his/her body.
3 AFTER BODY FLUID EXPOSURE RISK	WHEN? Clean your hands immediately after an exposure risk to body fluids (and after glove removal). WHY? To protect yourself and the healthcare environment from harmful patient germs.
4 AFTER PATIENT CONTACT	WHEN? Clean your hands after touching a patient and their immediate surroundings when leaving the patient's side. WHY? To protect yourself and the healthcare environment from harmful patient germs.
5 AFTER CONTACT WITH PATIENT SURROUNDINGS	WHEN? Clean your hands after touching any object or furniture in the patient's immediate surroundings when leaving - even if the patient has not been touched. WHY? To protect yourself and the healthcare environment from harmful patient germs.

In addition to the moments above, all staff are reminded to decontaminate their hands:

- Before preparing, eating, drinking or handling food.
- Before and after going to the toilet.
- Before and after smoking.
- Before starting work and after finishing work.
- Before putting on and after the removal of personal protective equipment.
- After handling contaminated items, dirty linen or waste.
- After cleaning equipment or environment or vehicles.

Existing cuts and abrasions must be covered with a dressing whilst on duty.

NIAS currently has three options for hand decontamination:

- Hand washing (NIAS premises, other Trust premises etc.).
- Alcohol Based Hand Rub.
- Hand wipes which can be used if there are no hand washing facilities available.

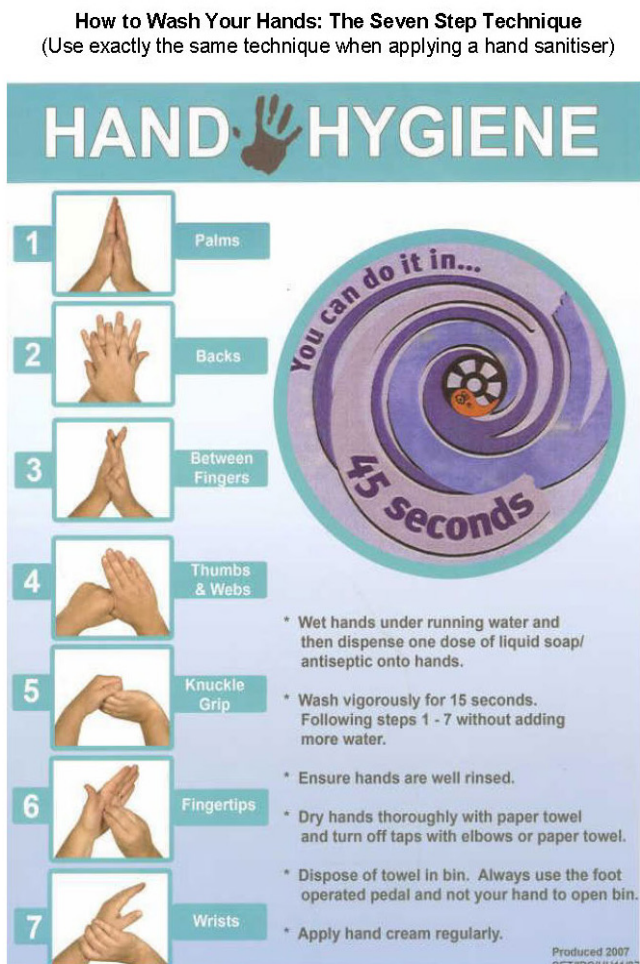
How effective is your hand hygiene technique*?

Ensure:

- *Forearms exposed (bare below the elbows);*
- *Hand and wrist jewellery is not worn (a single, plain metal finger ring is permitted but should be removed (or moved up) during hand hygiene);*
- *Finger nails are clean, short and that artificial nails or nail products are not worn;*
- *All cuts or abrasions are covered with a waterproof dressing.*

Where hands are not visibly soiled, or you have not been exposed to potentially infective diarrhoea, alcohol based hand rub can be used as an alternative to hand washing.

*Remember to **extend hand washing to exposed forearms** in accordance with infection prevention and control guidance (PHE, 2020).



Are you wearing disposable gloves appropriately?

Disposable gloves must be worn when providing direct patient care or when exposure to blood and/or other bodily fluids is anticipated or likely, including during equipment and environmental decontamination.

Disposable gloves should be worn as **single use** items and be removed and disposed of into the correct waste stream immediately following completion of a task and after each patient contact. Hand Hygiene must be undertaken before putting on and after taking off disposable gloves. Inappropriate glove use promotes missed opportunities to decontaminate hands thereby increasing the risk of the transmission of harmful germs such as COVID-19.

Skin Care

Your skin acts as a natural protective barrier against harmful germs. Continuous use of hand decontamination products can have a drying effect on your hands therefore it is important to protect skin by moisturising regularly. If you experience any problems using the hand hygiene products supplied by the Trust please speak to your line manager who can refer you to Occupational Health for advice.

This year the World Hand Hygiene Day on 5 May 2020 will be celebrated in a more unconventional way, however, the message for everyone to adhere to effective hand hygiene practices is greater than ever. Please continue to carry out effective hand hygiene in order to protect yourself and others.

Remember to decontaminate your hands frequently during this time of COVID-19, this is particularly important in shared environments such as in our stations and when touching things that are handled frequently in the workplace for example shore lines and drug cupboards etc.