

Information for patients and carers

Hand Hygiene

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Introduction

This leaflet provides information about hand hygiene and applies to both patients, carers and visitors. It describes the different ways to clean your hands and explains how good hand hygiene can help reduce infections in hospital, both for you and for others. Through contact with people, equipment, or the environment, your hands can pick up many types of bacteria and viruses (germs), some of which may cause infection. Even when your hands appear clean, germs too small to be seen may still be present. Effective hand hygiene is essential in preventing and controlling infection in healthcare settings.

Types of hand hygiene

Hand washing

Washing your hands with soap and water is commonly used in hospitals and is suitable for everyday social contact as well as most clinical activities. It helps maintain personal hygiene and must always be done when your hands are visibly dirty.

You should wash your hands:

- Before handling food, eating, drinking, or taking medication
- After using the toilet, bedpan, or commode
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After handling waste or rubbish
- After changing a nappy or pad
- Before and after touching wounds, intravenous drips, or changing dressings
- Whenever your hands are visibly dirty
- Before and after visiting someone in hospital

Hand sanitiser (alcohol hand rub)

Hand sanitiser offers a quick and convenient alternative to hand washing. It must be applied to dry hands and can be used when your hands appear clean and are not visibly soiled. Dispensers are located throughout clinical areas where patient care takes place.

Hand sanitiser is less effective against germs that cause vomiting and diarrhoea. It is especially important to wash your hands with soap and water when entering and leaving areas where patients have these symptoms.

Hand cleansing wipes

Hand wipes are available for all patients and are especially helpful for those who cannot easily access sinks or sanitiser dispensers. These are usually provided at mealtimes, but you can ask a member of staff if you need some.

Hand hygiene technique

The correct method for washing your hands is shown below:

7 Stage Hand Hygiene Technique: Repeat each step 5 times

1



Palm to palm

2



Back of each hand

3



In-between fingers

4



Backs of fingers, interlocked to opposing palms

5



Rotational rubbing of thumbs clasped in opposing palms

6



Rub fingertips on palm for both hands

7



Rub both wrists in a rotating manner.
Ensure hands are completely dry before moving on to your next task

Dry your hands thoroughly, this is extremely important. Whenever possible, use disposable paper towels, or change your hand towel daily. Regularly apply hand moisturiser to help maintain healthy skin.

Please note that all paper towels, wipes, incontinence pads, and any other non-flushable items must be disposed of in the bins provided, rather than in the toilets or sinks, to avoid blocking the drainage system.

How you can help prevent infection

There are several ways you can help reduce the spread of infection, especially when visiting a hospital or someone who is unwell.

- Do not visit if you feel unwell, or if anyone in your household has cold or flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea and or vomiting
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser when entering or leaving a clinical area, and regularly in between, even if your hands look clean
- Ask healthcare staff for advice before bringing food or drink into a clinical area
- Avoid sitting on patients' beds
- Do not touch dressings, catheters, or other clinical equipment unless you have been shown how to do so safely
- Tell the person in charge if you feel NHS premises are not as clean as they should be
- If you think a healthcare worker has forgotten to wash their hands, you are encouraged to remind them

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Infection, Prevention and Control Team on: **01772 523785/01257 245217**

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

patientexperienceandinvolvem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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