

# University Health Network Policy & Procedure Manual Infection Prevention & Control: Hand Hygiene

## 1. Policy

[Hand hygiene](#) is the responsibility of all individuals involved in healthcare.

Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) is the preferred method for decontaminating hands and is recommended for use when hands are not visibly soiled.

Hand washing with soap and water must be performed when hands are visibly soiled.

Hand washing should be performed at a dedicated hand hygiene sink, and **not** be carried out at a patient sink, in order to avoid re-contamination.

**Hand hygiene must be performed** in the following circumstances:

- before contact with the patient or patient's environment
  - after contact with the patient or patient's environment
  - after blood/body fluid exposure risk
  - before an aseptic procedure
  - if hands are visibly soiled
  - before donning gloves
  - before preparing, handling, serving, or eating food
  - before and after delivery and collection of all meal trays on a unit in non-isolation rooms when no contact is made with the patient or the patient's environment (including curtains and door handles)
  - before and after delivery or collection of each meal tray to and from isolation rooms
  - after collecting dirty meal trays from the soiled utility room, when applicable
  - before feeding a patient
  - after removing gloves
  - after touching environmental surfaces or objects (e.g. after touching reusable patient equipment, surfaces in patient rooms, door handles, etc.)
- Note:** Except when Environmental Services are collecting the garbage moving from room to room for non-isolated patients.
- after using the toilet
  - any other circumstances where deemed appropriate

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## 2. Definition

**Hand hygiene:** Refers to removing or killing microorganisms on the hands as well as maintaining good skin integrity. Frequent and appropriate hand hygiene is the most important way of preventing the spread of hospital-acquired infections.

## 3. Procedures

### 3.1 Using Waterless (Alcohol-based) Gel or Foam

**Note:** Alcohol-based gel or foam is the preferred method for decontaminating hands. Wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.

1. Dispense a small amount of sanitizer into the palm of a dry hand.
2. Rub hands together until dry, ensuring coverage between fingers, around and under nails, on palms, back of hands, and wrists (minimum of 15 seconds).

### 3.2 Using Soap and Warm Water

1. Remove all jewelry.
2. Turn on the tap and rinse hands under warm running water.
3. Apply soap, and lather.
4. Use friction between fingers, on palms/wrists/back of hands and around nails (minimum of 15 seconds).
5. Rinse hands under warm running water.
6. Pat hands dry with paper towels.
7. Turn off faucet using paper towel (if not electronic or foot/elbow operated).

### 3.3 Moisturize Skin

1. Use the provided moisturizer as needed in order to protect the integrity of the skin.
2. If there is a break down in skin integrity, go to Health Services for an assessment.

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## 4. References

1. Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC). (2014). *Best Practices for Hand Hygiene in All Health Care Settings, 4th edition*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf>

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