

Hand Hygiene—I wash because I “CARE”

Information for Patients, Families and Caregivers



You can substantially reduce your risk of illness (and the risk for the people you visit) by the simple act of cleaning your hands

Why should I clean my hands?

Keeping hands clean is the best defense in preventing the spread of infection and disease. Hands may look clean but invisible micro organisms (germs) are always present - some harmful, some not.

When healthcare workers wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rub, they are helping to stop the spread of infection and disease. Patients, visitors and caregivers can do their part as well to prevent germs from spreading by using proper hand washing techniques. Hand washing is the simplest and easiest way of preventing the spread of infection and disease.

Alcohol Based Hand Rub is available throughout Island Health and is the preferred method, although soap and water should be used if hands are visibly soiled.

When should I clean my hands?

- On entering and leaving the hospital and hospital unit
- After visiting the toilet
- Before eating or handling food
- When hands are visibly soiled
- After coughing or sneezing into the hands

When should I use Alcohol Based Hand Rub?

Alcohol Based Hand Rub dispensers at most Island Health sites are orange. Alcohol Based Hand Rub containing between 70%-90% alcohol is the preferred product of choice to routinely decontaminate hands which are not visibly soiled as it:

- Rapidly and effectively kills most transient microorganisms;
- Is easily accessible and less time-consuming than washing with soap and water; and,
- Is gentler on skin and less drying than soap and water.

Technique for Alcohol Based Hand Rub:

All hand surfaces must be covered and rubbed vigorously for effective hand hygiene . Apply enough product to palm of hand to cover all surfaces/areas of hands and wrists. Apply sufficient product such that it will remain in contact with the hands for a minimum of 15 seconds before the product



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How should I clean my hands if I use soap and water?

Cleaning the hands will remove the majority of germs and prevents the spread of infection. Soap dispensers at most Island Health sites are blue.

- If using soap, wet hands with water (not necessary with Alcohol Based Hand Rub);
- Apply one pump of soap to palms;
- Rub hands together vigorously, covering all surfaces/areas of hands, fingers and wrists until any soiled areas are removed;
- A minimum of 15 seconds of lathering is required before rinsing.
- Rinse hands with water and pat dry with a disposable towel;
- Turn off taps with paper towel, to avoid recontamination of the hands



Wet hands and apply soap. Cover all areas of your hands as shown below. Rinse hands and pat dry with disposable towel. Turn off tap with towel.



It's okay to ask your healthcare provider to clean their hands.



Stopping the spread of infection is everybody's business.

For more info, visit: www.viha.ca