

## Infection Prevention

Many bacteria (germs) such as Staph are readily found on the human body and in the environment. Some are harmful if they enter a wound or blood stream. When you have a cut or incision or your immune system is compromised, you are at risk of infection.

Therefore, it is important that you (and your visitors) avoid touching wounds, intravenous catheters, drains or broken skin etc.

Bacteria from your bowel or perianal area can be harmful if it enters a wound, therefore it is important that you wash your hands after going to the toilet, touching your face, nose, mouth and before and after eating.

### The 5 moments for hand hygiene

Staff wash or sanitise their hands at various times and as demonstrated in diagram 1.

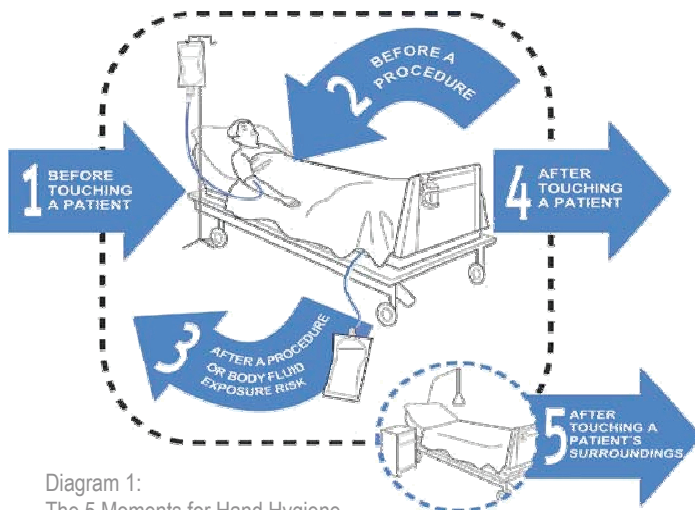


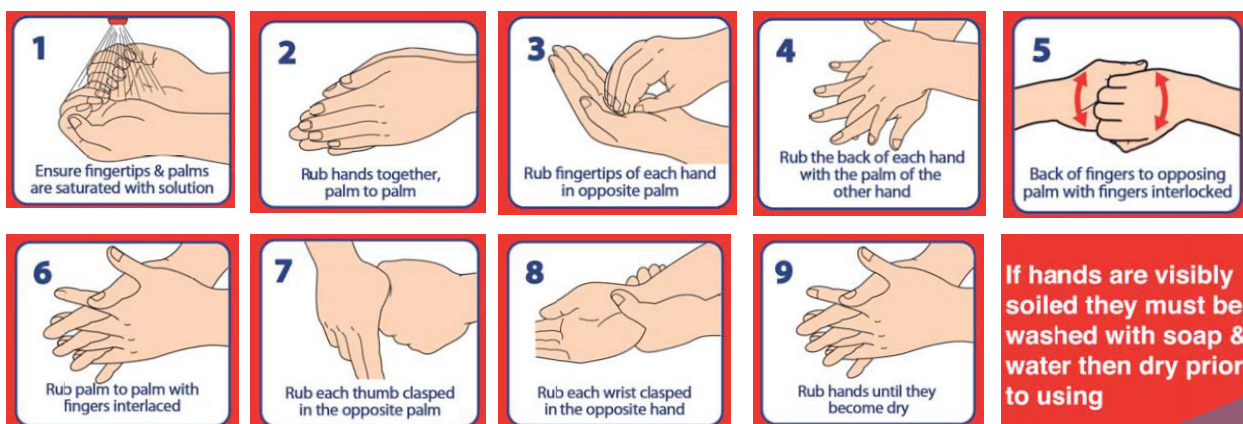
Diagram 1:  
The 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene

If there is a need for you or a visitor/carer to touch or attend to your wounds, lesions, catheters etc, it is important to wash your hands or use waterless sanitiser (if hands are not visibly soiled) using the correct technique.

Technique for Hand Wash with Soap & Water:

1. You should wet your hands and forearms apply one dose of soap and lather well.
2. Ensure you apply soap, water and friction to all surfaces including finger webs, palms, back of hands, knuckles, nails, thumbs and wrists.
3. Rinse well and pat dry with a paper towel or freshly laundered towel. Any of the nursing staff would be happy to demonstrate the correct technique for hand washing or use of hand sanitiser.

### Technique for using waterless sanitiser



Please see overleaf for information on how you can help to minimise your risk of infection and promotion of a rapid recovery.

## How to minimise your risk of infection and promote rapid recovery:

- If you or a close contact has had a recent cold, cough, temperature, infection (or infection following previous procedure) please advise your doctor and preadmission clinic prior to admission or the nursing staff looking after you.
- If you have risk factors for being infected or colonised (carrier) for an MRO (multi resistant organism) eg; MRSA, VRE, please inform your doctor and preadmission nurse. Special precautions or preventative treatment may be required.
- If you have any cuts, burns, abrasions or rashes on your skin, please inform the nurse. Try to avoid skin damage prior to surgery.
- False fingernails or nail enhancements and chipped nail polish, increase the risk of harbouring germs.
- If your doctor requires the hair to be removed from the operation site, the preferred method is to use a clipper that leaves a stubble rather than a razor which provides a close shave, but also can cause small cuts or abrasions on the skin that increase your risk of infection.
- Chlorhexidine or Triclosan based soap products have been found to reduce bacteria on the skin. We recommend at least two full body showers (including hair) in the 24 hours prior to surgery, using liquid soap products that contain Chlorhexidine or Triclosan. Particular attention should be paid to skin folds, underarms, umbilicus (navel) and genital area. It is important to use a freshly laundered wash cloth to apply the product to all areas of the body and a freshly laundered towel for each shower.

### Method:

1. Wet whole face, body and hair in the shower or bath.
2. Apply a small amount of Chlorhexidine Pre-Op Wash to wet hair. Lather well and rinse.
3. Apply a small amount of Chlorhexidine Pre-Op Wash, undiluted, to your face. Pay special attention to the NOSE area. Avoid contact with the eyes (shut lids tightly). Rinse with water.
4. Work down to NECK and ARMS. Pay special attention to the UNDERARMS and NAVEL. Using a clean sponge or wash cloth can assist.
5. Now cleanse the GENITAL area, BUTTOCKS and ANAL area with the sponge and foaming wash.

**Men:** Special attention to penis and beneath the scrotum.

**Women:** Special attention to the skin folds of the vulva.

6. Work down cleansing your THIGHS and LEGS.
7. Rinse your entire body.
8. Now wash your whole body again working down from the face (NOSE), ARMPITS, NAVEL, GENITAL AREA, ANAL region and BUTTOCKS especially.
9. Rinse your entire body.
10. Dry yourself thoroughly with a freshly laundered towel. Freshly laundered clothes should be worn afterwards.

- Chlorhexidine wash can be obtained from the pre-admission clinic or purchased from the chemist. Products containing Chlorhexidine or Triclosan are satisfactory.
- Ensure good nutrition before and after surgery as this improves the healing process.
- Ensure good dental and gum health prior to surgery. Inform your dentist of your upcoming surgery, as the dentist may need to confer with the surgeon prior to any treatment commencing etc.
- Practise deep breathing and lung expansion as this improves oxygen perfusion to the tissues and improves the healing process.
- The Hospital stay should be kept to a minimum.
- Diabetes should be well controlled.
- Avoid smoking as Nicotine use delays wound healing and may increase infection risk.
- It may be necessary to restrict visitors if you are unwell, immune suppressed or have an infection that may be easily transmitted to others. People who have infections eg: cold sores, conjunctivitis, cold, flu, communicable diseases (eg Chicken Pox, Whooping Cough, Gastroenteritis) should not visit patients in hospital. This is particularly important if they are visiting babies, the maternity ward, Intensive Care Unit or you are immune deficient.
- Safe storage and transport of injecting materials for patients with Diabetes or having to self inject medications. All sharps and injecting materials are to be placed in a rigid container with a lid. Sharps must not be stored loose in toiletry bags or luggage. Sharps disposal will be discussed on admission.
- Luggage brought into the hospital setting should be kept to a minimum, should be clean and should not contain food items.

References: "Guideline for Prevention of Surgical Site Infection, 1999", HICPAC, CDC.  
Hand Hygiene Australia, [www.hha.org.au](http://www.hha.org.au)