



HAND WASHING

Introduction

Hand washing is the most important infection control tool available to you. It is a vital step in breaking the cycle of infection. Proper hand washing, as described in this module, must be done every time indicated to break the cycle of infection permanently.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe why hand washing is important.
2. Define what the chain of events for pathogens is.
3. Identify how and when proper hand washing is done.

Lesson

Infections have become an increasingly important challenge inside and outside of health care settings. Infections can cause you to be sick and miss work. You can spread infections to your family and your patients. Infection can cause your patient to remain in the Center longer, or be transferred to the hospital if they become seriously ill.

According to the “germ theory”, every disease is caused by microorganisms. Microorganisms are bacteria, viruses, fungi and protozoa. Some microorganisms are helpful and can be harmful (pathogens). Infection occurs when pathogens invade the body and cause disease.

In order for a pathogen to cause an infection, it must follow a chain of transmission. There must be:

1. exposure to a pathogen;
2. source (human body) where pathogen can grow and reproduce;
3. a portal of exit,
4. a mode of transmission (carried from one person to another— hands, feet, sexual contact);
5. a portal of entry;
6. and a susceptible host.

Hand washing breaks the chain of transmission

Elderly and frail patients are more susceptible to infectious diseases. Bacteria are often the cause of serious illnesses.

There are certain pathogens that have become resistant against the antibiotics used against them. Two groups of pathogens have become resistant are commonly referred to as MRSA and VRE.

MRSA is Methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is naturally found on skin and mucous membranes.

VRE is vancomycin resistant enterococci. These enterococci are naturally found in the stomach and intestinal tract.

Prevention Protects You, Your Co-Workers And Your Patients

Prevent the transmission of infection to protect yourself, your coworkers and your patients.

Proper hand washing reduces the number of pathogens that are transmitted or completely interrupts the transmission from one person to another.

Proper Hand Washing Prevents The Spread Of Germs

Hand washing is the **most important** task in caring for residents. This prevents the spread of germs that can cause infection.

Proper hand washing includes washing your hands for at least 15 seconds and 30 seconds is recommended. You must get all surfaces of hands, including between your fingers.

If the area under our fingernails is contaminated, you must use a tool such as a nail brush to clean that area. You must rinse your hands thoroughly, with your fingertips above your elbows so that that rinse water flows toward the elbow.

When To Washing Your Hands

You need to wash your hands at each of the following times:

1. Before you start your shift.
2. Before providing any care to a resident or patient.
3. After taking care of a resident.
4. Between patient/resident contacts.
5. Before handling clean linen.
6. Before feeding a patient/resident.
7. After feeding a patient/resident.
8. After using any piece of equipment.
9. Immediately after touching body secretions, blood or contaminated items.
10. Before you eat.
11. After you eat.
12. After toileting.
13. After sneezing, coughing or blowing nose.
14. After applying makeup.
15. End of work day before going home.

Our Center's goal is 100% compliance with the hand washing policy.

Your goal is 100% compliance with the hand washing policy of this Center.

Proper Hand Washing Technique

1. Remove all jewelry. It is okay to keep a simple band-type ring on.
2. Turn on the water using a dry paper towel on the faucet.
3. Adjust the water to a comfortable temperature.
4. Holding your hands down, so the water runs off your fingertips into the sink, wet your hands.
5. Add liquid soap and lather.
6. Vigorously rub your hands together and interlace your fingers to wash all areas of your hands.
7. If the area under your fingernails is contaminated, use a brush or other suitable tool to clean under the nails.
8. Wash your hands for a minimum of 15 seconds, preferably 30 seconds.
9. Dry your hands thoroughly on a disposable towel.
10. Throw the used towel in the garbage.
11. With a new paper towel, turn off the faucet and throw that paper towel away immediately.

It is best to use liquid soap that is antimicrobial or antibacterial. If you use a bar soap, it must be one that is on a draining rack. Bar soaps often sit in unclean water and never dry off so that organisms may be on the soap.

Use disposable paper towels and throw them away immediately after use. If soap and paper towels are not available tell the appropriate person to obtain a new supply.

If a sink and running water are not immediately available, a waterless (alcohol-based) hand cleanser may be used. This type of product is not intended to replace hand washing with water. You must cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers and follow the manufacturer's recommendations for use. If you do use this cleanser, wash your hands as soon as possible with soap and water

Protect yourself, your Patients and your family—

Wash your hands with soap and water:

When you get to work and before you leave for the day.

Before and after you care for a patient.

Before and after you eat.

Before and after you feed a patient.

Before touching clean linen.

After you use the bathroom, cough, sneeze or blow your nose.

Whenever they look and feel dirty.

Summary

Hand hygiene is the most important step you can take to break the chain of infection.

Hands should be washed:

When they look or feel dirty.

Before and after your shift.

Before and after caring for a patient.

Before and after wearing gloves.

Before and after eating and feeding a patient.

After using the bathroom, coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

Before touching clean linens.

When washing your hands:

Use liquid soap.

Use a paper towel to protect hands when touching the faucet.

Let the water run towards elbows.

Wash for a minimum of 15 seconds, preferably 30.

Post-Test

Question 1

I should use my bare hands to turn the water off and on.

- True (incorrect— It is important to protect your hands from contamination by using a paper towel to turn the water on and off with a paper towel that is thrown away immediately.)
False (correct—Protect your hands from contamination by using a paper towel to turn the water on and off with a paper towel that is thrown away immediately.)

Question 2

The following is the length of time it takes to properly wash my hands.

- 5 to 15 seconds (Incorrect - you should wash your hands for 15 to 30 seconds.)
10 to 20 seconds (Incorrect - you should wash your hands for 15 to 30 seconds.)
30 to 40 seconds (Incorrect - you should wash your hands for 15 to 30 seconds.)
15 to 30 seconds (Correct)

Question 3

When rinsing my hands, I should allow the water to run off my fingertips?

- True (Incorrect—the water, carrying away the soap and organisms, should flow toward your elbows to avoid recontamination of your fingertips.)
False (Correct—the water, carrying away the soap and organisms, should flow toward your elbows to avoid recontamination of your fingertips.)

Question 4

Which is the preferred soap to use when performing hand hygiene?

- Bar soap. (Incorrect. Bar soap often does not dry out between uses so it may have organisms on it.)
Liquid antibacterial or antimicrobial soap. (Correct. Liquid soap containing antibacterial or antimicrobial soap is preferred.)
Dish soap. (Incorrect. Liquid soap containing antibacterial or antimicrobial soap is preferred.)
Body wash and shampoo. (Incorrect. Liquid soap containing antibacterial or antimicrobial soap is preferred.)

Question 5

I can do my part to stop the spread of infection by proper hand washing.

- True. (Hand washing is the most important step you can take to break the chain of infection by interrupting the transmission of pathogens.)
False. (Hand washing is the most important step you can take to break the chain of infection by interrupting the transmission of pathogens.)

FOR THE QA COMMITTEE/DSD ONLY—Not part of the inservice material.

Suggested QA implementation.

The web-inservice or hard-copy inservice is introduced at orientation.

The DSD observes the staff using proper technique for hand washing and signs the Certificate of Completion.

Periodic observation of all employees is performed for their compliance with the Center's hand washing policy.

Hand washing observation data is collected and recorded on the hand washing dashboard.

Re-education of staff is required when the staff show non-compliance with the policy.

Annual renewal is done.