

## Information on Hand Washing

### Why should I wash my hands?

Hand washing is the simplest and easiest way of preventing the spread of infection. Hands may look clean but invisible micro-organisms (germs) are always present, some harmful, some not.

### When should I wash my hands?

- before and after preparing food
- before meal times
- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- after visiting the toilet or changing nappies
- after touching animals or animal waste
- whenever hands are visibly dirty
- before and after carrying out physical care, eg handling body fluids, emptying a urinary catheter bag, dressing a wound or wearing medical gloves

### General hand care

- keep nails short, to prevent bacteria (germs) growing under nails
- dry hands well to prevent chapping
- cover cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing
- use hand cream to protect hands from chapping

### How do I wash my hands?

- ideally remove all wrist and hand jewellery (if you wear a wedding ring it is important that you wash under it)
- wet hands under warm running water, apply soap and rub vigorously for at least 15 seconds covering all surfaces of the hands
- rinse under running water and dry thoroughly

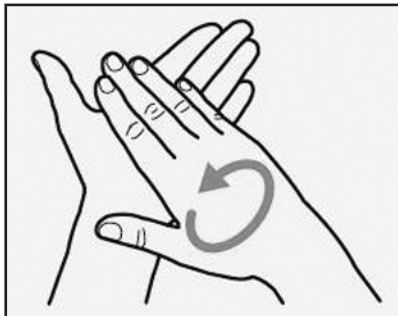
### Alcohol gel/hand-rub

If you are visiting healthcare premises eg a clinic, you may be asked to use an alcohol gel or hand-rub. This is an acceptable alternative to hand washing with soap and water. The solution should be applied to all areas of the hands until the solution dries (approximately 15-20 seconds).

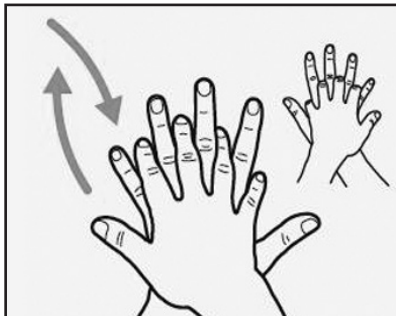
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## When not to use alcohol hand-rub

Alcohol hand-rub is not effective against some infections that cause diarrhoea, eg Norovirus, Clostridium difficile. It should not be used if hands are dirty as dirt prevents alcohol handrub working.



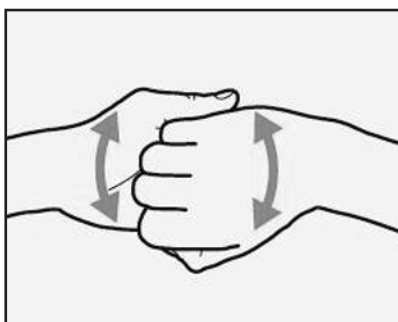
Rub hands palm to palm



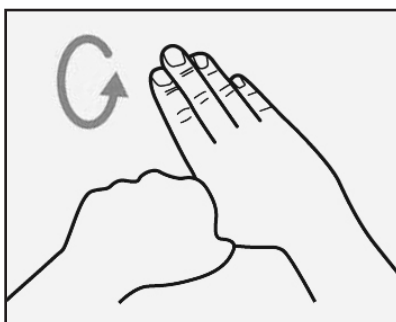
Rub back of each hand with the palm of the other hand with fingers interlaced



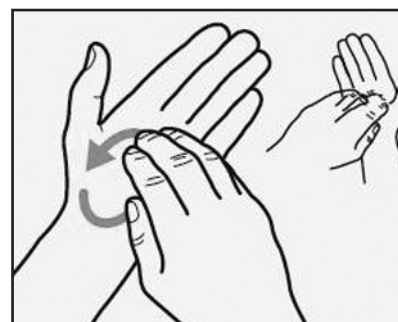
Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



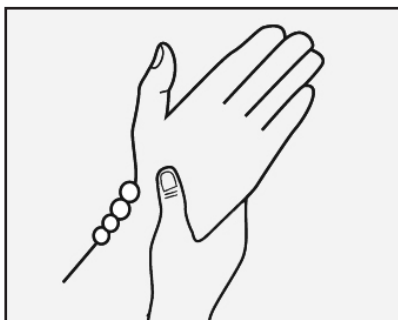
Rub with backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlaced



Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using rotational movement



Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion



Rub each wrist with opposite hand

If a member of our clinical staff needs to examine you or undertake a procedure, do not be afraid to ask if they have cleaned their hands. Our clinical staff are trained to expect patients to ask this question.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)

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