



IPC NEWS

May 2019

Edition 7 Hand Hygiene

Infection prevention and control...



is in your hands!

Healthcare associated infections affect millions of people worldwide every year, infections can lead to:

- serious illness
- prolonged hospital stays
- long-term disability
- emotional distress for patients/residents and families
- higher financial burden on the health and care system
- increased resistance of microorganisms to antimicrobials, such as antibiotics
- loss of life

Infections are caused by many different factors related to care provision; however, most infections are preventable.

Hand hygiene is a crucial measure to reduce infection and enhance patient/resident safety. Even if your hands appear clean, they may carry germs - **if only all germs were visible!**



So what can you do?

Washing your hands correctly, or using an alcohol-based hand rub, is the most effective thing you can do to protect patients/residents and help to prevent the spread of infection. **Always remember to use liquid soap and water for hand hygiene following any exposure to bodily fluids, when hands are visibly soiled and when caring for anybody with a gastrointestinal illness.**

Think of it like 'a war against infection' and you are in the front line - your actions can stop infection spreading to people in your care, to you, and to your family. Performing hand hygiene should be consistent, correct and at the right moment, follow the **WHO 5 moments for hand hygiene:**



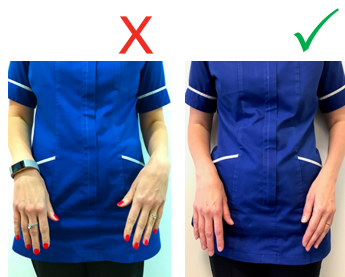
Always remember to wash your hands after removal of PPE!

Why is it important?

Everyone is busy, but hand hygiene is important. It is everyone's responsibility.

For effective hand hygiene you need:

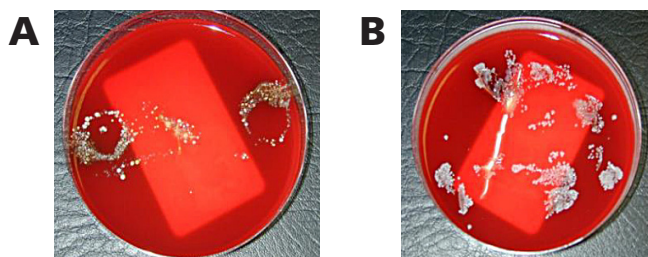
- liquid soap
- paper towels
- warm running water
- alcohol hand rub (if appropriate)
- to be bare below the elbow (BBE)!



Why is BBE important?

Long sleeves or jewellery, **eg wrist watches, fitbits, bracelets, jewelled rings** can become heavily contaminated. **False or painted nails** encourage the growth of bacteria and fungi around the nail bed. These areas provide an ideal environment for microorganisms to thrive which can be passed on to patients/residents.

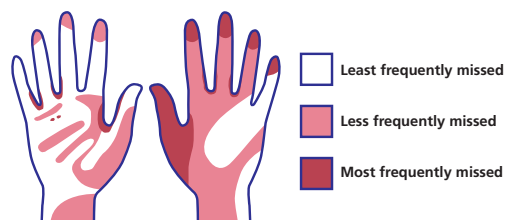
Examples of agar plates showing bacterial growth from jewelled rings (A) and false nails (B).



Did you know?

- Bars of soap are easily contaminated with microorganisms (especially if it's been sitting in water) so must not be used by health and care staff.
- Washing your hands properly takes about as long as singing Happy Birthday twice.
- The link between handwashing and the spread of disease was first established in 1847. Physician Ignaz Semmelweis, demonstrated that hand washing with chlorinated lime solution drastically reduced the number of women dying of puerperal fever following childbirth. And so, hand hygiene in healthcare began.

Areas of the hands most frequently missed.



What would you like to see in our next newsletter?

Let us know by email to IPC.wirralct@nhs.net or call 0151 604 7750.

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