

PATIENT INFORMATION

Hand Hygiene

Clean Hands Save Lives

Why is it important to wash your hands during your hospital stay?

It is important to maintain good Hand Hygiene whilst you are in hospital to protect yourself. It is the most effective method of preventing and controlling the spread of infection. This is extremely important for all staff, patients, and visitors.

To assist in stopping the spread of germs when you are in hospital and particularly vulnerable. Germs can also cause illnesses such as colds, tummy bugs as well as more serious illness.

Hands are used for many different tasks and because of contact with other people, equipment or surroundings can become contaminated. Therefore, our hands are often carriers in the spread of infections and germs.

How can you maintain good Hand Hygiene during your stay?

It is important for all patients and visitors to be able to wash their hands. If you find this is not possible, please discuss with a member of staff. Please wash your hands:

- when you arrive on the ward with soap and water or alcohol hand gel which is available at the entrance and exit to all wards.
- before and after touching your surroundings, i.e. curtains, bed, locker, bedside table, or belongings.
- after using the toilet, bedpan, commode or changing a nappy.
- before eating and drinking (wipes are available at every mealtime, you may be prompted by staff to use the wipes).
- after blowing your nose or coughing into your hands.
- when your hands are visibly dirty.

Guidelines for Hand Hygiene

Hand Washing technique

- Firstly, ensure your hands are wet before applying liquid soap.
- Hands should be rubbed together for 15-20 seconds to ensure the soapy water meets all surfaces of both hands.
- Rinse your hands thoroughly to remove all soap and dry them with disposable paper towels.
- Follow the hand washing technique diagrams on the posters above all sinks.
- It is important to ensure you wash under any rings and Trust staff should be 'bare below the elbows' to allow good practice in Hand Hygiene.

Using Hand Sanitiser

- Hands should be free from visible dirt as hand gel is not advised if hands are visibly dirty. You will need to wash your hands with soap and water.
- Use enough sanitiser/gel to completely cover all surfaces of both hands.
- Hands should be rubbed together until the solution has evaporated completely.

As hand sanitiser has a limited effect on germs that cause Diarrhoea and Vomiting illnesses, it is extremely important that you wash your hands with soap and water if you have these symptoms.

Please encourage your visitors to also wash their hands with soap and water before they leave.

Cleansing your hands is the single most important factor in helping to protect you against infections.

It is vital that all staff wash their hands before performing any care for you.

Don't be afraid to remind a member of staff to wash their hands before undertaking any care or treatment.

If you think a member of staff has forgotten to clean their hands, **Remember, 'It's OK to ask'. Ask to speak to the ward manager if you have any concerns.**

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.