Hand Hygiene Statement

July 2018

HAND HYGIENE

Hand Hygiene is another name for hand washing or cleaning. Hands can be effectively cleaned with either soap and water, or with waterless hand sanitizer (ABHR). Both are equally effective. It is an expectation that all staff at the Centre for Digestive Diseases (CDD) frequently clean their hands.

Hand hygiene is simple and is the most important way of preventing infections in hospital. Our hands may look clean but many germs are invisible to our eyes. We can unknowingly transmit bacteria and viruses to others and our environment. Germs can survive on unwashed hands for over an hour.

People sometimes take short-cuts when they are supposed to wash their hands – particularly when there is no dirt visible. And unfortunately, hand hygiene is sometimes not well performed by health care workers.

WHAT CDD IS DOING TO IMPROVE HAND HYGIENE

It is important that we check whether healthcare workers are using correct hand hygiene. There is no magic way of knowing if a person has washed their hands. The accepted way of measuring hand hygiene is for a trained auditor to watch healthcare workers as they go about their day, treating patients in hospital. There is a government-approved organization called ‘Hand Hygiene Australia’ that helps with this measurement. CDD has an auditor on site.
Each opportunity for hand hygiene is called a “moment”.

Five Moments for hand hygiene have been identified by the World Health Organization as the critical times when hand hygiene should be performed in hospital. These are

**Moment one:** Before touching a patient

**Moment two:** Before a procedure

**Moment 3:** After a procedure

**Moment 4:** After touching a patient

**Moment 5:** After touching a patient’s belongings or surroundings

At CDD we audit staff during each of these moments. The auditor records whether or not hand hygiene has been performed correctly by each staff member at each “moment”. At the end of the audit, an overall score is calculated. This is shown in the graph below.
This graph shows the percentage of moments where hand hygiene was performed correctly at CDD for the past 6 months compared with the Australian national benchmark of 70%.

When audits are performed, each professional group is checked – including doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff. The graph on the below shows the hand hygiene rate for different staff within the hospital. The graph shows that compliance rates for nurses are higher than for other staff.

WHAT WE ARE DOING TO FURTHER REDUCE INFECTIONS
Improvement strategies may vary from facility to facility. At CDD the following strategies are used:
• Conducting regular education programs for staff about infections and hand hygiene.
• Placement of hand sanitizer dispensers in convenient areas throughout the hospital, including hallways and patient rooms. This makes hand hygiene readily accessible to staff, patients, families and visitors.
• Monitoring the type of soap/hand sanitizer used, to minimize skin irritation
• In some areas - use of specially designed washbasins where water can be turned on and off without touching the tap.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
At CDD, patients and visitors are part of the health care team. Hand hygiene is the most important way that patients and visitors can prevent the spread of infection in hospital. Waterless hand sanitizer is just as effective as washing with soap and water. Hospital staff will appreciate a reminder from patients or relatives if they forget to wash their hands.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION
• Wash your hands carefully with soap and water or use hand sanitiser upon entering and leaving the hospital.
• Wash your hands carefully with soap and water or use hand sanitiser when entering and leaving a patient’s room.
• Observe hospital signage about hand hygiene.
• If you are unable to find a hand sanitiser station, please ask staff for assistance.