AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION
ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

Hand hygiene for patients and carers

Good hand hygiene is a simple way to stop the spread of sickness and disease.

What is hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene means washing your hands with soap and water or rubbing them with sanitiser.

When should you perform hand hygiene?

If you can see that your hands are dirty, always wash them with soap and water.

As you may not be able to see the germs on your hands, you can also use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Always perform hand hygiene:

- When you enter or leave a hospital, a clinic or a patient's room.

Perform hand hygiene before:

- You touch a patient or start helping with their care, such as showering or changing a dressing
- Handling medicines
- Preparing or eating food
- Touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Perform hand hygiene after:

- Blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Going to the toilet
- Touching animals and pets, including therapy pets.

Why is hand hygiene important?

Good hand hygiene protects patients and carers from germs that cause sickness and disease, such as flu, gastro or COVID-19.

These germs can be on surfaces and equipment that you touch.

As a carer, you could transfer these germs to the person you care for, without knowing.

How to use hand sanitiser

1 apply a small amount of sanitiser to the palm of your hand.

2 rub the sanitiser all over your hands, including your fingers, thumbs and wrists.

3 Allow the sanitiser to **dry**

5 easy steps for hand washing

1 wet
hands with running water.

2 soap
your hands and lather up.

3 rub
all over your hands, including between your fingers and thumbs, for **20 seconds**. Sing 'Happy Birthday' out loud twice.

4 rinse
hands under running water.

5 dry
hands using paper towel.

Hand hygiene protects us

Everyone should do hand hygiene often, including at home, in hospital, when attending healthcare appointments, and when out and about in the community.

Your healthcare rights

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights that consumers, or someone they care for, can expect when receiving health care.

These rights apply to all people in all places that health care is provided in Australia. This includes public and private hospitals, day procedure services, general practice, and other community health services. These rights include the right to receive safe and high-quality health care that meets national standards.

NHHI
National Hand Hygiene Initiative

For more information

Visit the **National Hand Hygiene Initiative** at www.safetyandquality.gov.au/nhhi