

Overview

This standard concerns carrying out effective hand hygiene to ensure that potentially harmful microorganisms do not spread infections. The standard applies to everyone working in all health and social care environments, including community and domiciliary settings and ambulance care settings.

Hands are the most common way in which microorganisms are transferred to people, particularly those who are susceptible to infection. Effective hand hygiene is the single most important practice in reducing the spread of infectious agents, particularly bacteria and viruses, during the delivery of care. Everyone has a personal responsibility to undertake effective hand hygiene.

The standard should be used alongside relevant legislation, guidelines, policies, procedures and protocols.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies.

Perform hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infection

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. access and accurately interpret all relevant work instructions and information
2. work safely at all times and in accordance with all relevant legislation, guidelines, policies, procedures and protocols
3. deal promptly and effectively with any problems within your control and report those which cannot be solved
4. identify and minimise hazards and risk in the workplace
5. continually assess the need to perform effective hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infection
6. prepare to carry out hand hygiene activities in accordance with organisational requirements
7. carry out hand hygiene activities in accordance with organisational requirements
8. complete hand hygiene activities and dry hands in accordance with organisational requirements
9. avoid contamination of your hands between hand hygiene and carrying out the activity
10. ensure fingernails are short and clean and without nail polish or artificial fingernails and accessories
11. assess your hands, before each working shift, for cuts, cracks and breaks in the skin that could harbour microorganisms
12. cover any cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing, change the dressing when required, and keep the area clean to reduce the risk of infection
13. maintain good hand skin hydration by using moisturiser as appropriate
14. report any skin problems to relevant others so an assessment can be undertaken
15. dispose of waste in accordance with organisational procedures
16. complete and store all relevant documentation in accordance with organisational requirements

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the current legislation, guidelines, policies, procedures and protocols which are relevant to your work practice and to which you must adhere
2. the scope and limitations of your own competence, responsibilities and accountability as it applies to your job role
3. how to access and interpret all relevant work instructions and information
4. specific procedures for reporting issues which are beyond your competence, responsibilities and accountability
5. the duty to report any acts or omissions that could be unsafe/detrimental to you or others
6. the hazards and risks which may arise during the execution of your work role and how you can minimise these
7. the correct use of any equipment and PPE to protect the health and safety of you and others
8. relevant standard infection prevention and control precautions, national legislation/guidance and local policies/procedures
9. the chain of infection
10. hierarchy of controls
11. the key moments of hand hygiene
12. the importance of 'bare below the elbow' to enable effective hand hygiene
13. how hand and wrist jewellery, artificial fingernails, nail products and accessories can harbour microorganisms
14. how to access facilities and materials for hand hygiene
15. the different types of hand hygiene materials including alcohol based hand rubs and soaps
16. the advantages/disadvantages of soap v alcohol based hand rubs and how and when to select the correct method
17. the circumstances in which alcohol based hand rubs would not be appropriate for hand hygiene
18. alternative methods of hand hygiene to be utilised when facilities are lacking or running water not available
19. hand hygiene techniques for performing effective hand hygiene for self and others

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- 20. the importance of keeping your hands healthy
- 21. how and when to report any issues
- 22. how to dispose of waste in accordance with organisational procedures
- 23. how to complete and store all relevant documentation in accordance with organisational requirements

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