

safety focus

HAND HYGIENE = CLEAN HANDS

Hand hygiene can be the most effective way to reduce the risks of passing germs from one person to another or from one surface to another. These germs can cause infections.



Hand Washing - You remove most germs by rubbing your hands together with soap, and water. Wash your hands if they are visibly dirty.

Hand Sanitizer - You kill most germs that may be present on your hands in less than 30 seconds.



Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after contact with contaminated equipment or other surfaces, between patient contacts, and after removing gloves. Remember, your hands can't be visibly dirty with body substances or dirt when you use hand sanitizer.

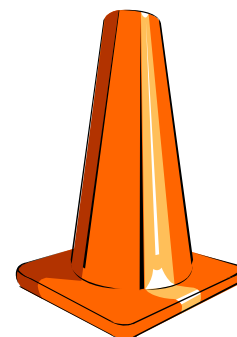
Wearing gloves does not replace the need for hand hygiene! Gloves can have small, hidden defects or may be torn during use, and hands can become contaminated when removing gloves. Gloves also provide the perfect environment for germs on your hands to multiply if worn for a very long period of time (like a little greenhouse). Failure to change gloves, wash, or sanitize hands creates an infection control and safety hazard.

Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer or wash your hands often:

- After touching anything contaminated.
- Before and after patient contact.
- After removing gloves.
- Before you prepare food.
- After touching raw meat.
- Before you eat.
- After you use the restroom.
- After you change a diaper.
- Before and after you care for someone who is sick, very young, or very old.
- After touching animals.

Wash your hands the right way:

1. **Wet hands under running water (cool, not hot).** Note: Rings may need to be removed for adequate hand washing as germs can live under them. Watches can harbor germs under the bands, also. Remove it or move the watch up on your arm.
2. **Put soap on your hands.** It is better to use a liquid soap because germs can live on wet bars of soap.
3. **Lather hands and rub together to create friction for at least 15 seconds.** Wash fingers, thumbs, palms, back of hands and wrists. Pay attention to your nails and cuticles - germs like to hide in these places.
4. **Rinse.** Do this under running water to remove soap residue.
5. **Pat hands dry with paper towels, and use a clean, dry paper towel to turn water off.** Consider opening the door to the restroom with a paper towel.



Questions? Contact the Infection Control Program at 503 494-6694.

This information is a service of the OHSU Safety Committee (503 494-7795). 1/08