



HAND HYGIENE

Handwashing is a simple effective procedure which, if carried out correctly, contributes more than any other single thing to the control of infection. However, it is often neglected or carried out poorly. The information sheet hopes to inform you of effective handwashing techniques (see diagram overleaf)

How to Wash Hands

To be effective, hands should be wet thoroughly with water before applying clean soap. All surfaces of both hands should then be vigorously massaged with the lather. In communal settings liquid soap should be used instead of bar soap.

Remember to pay special attention to the fingertips, thumbs, and wrists and between the fingers as these areas are frequently missed. The whole handwashing process should be no more than 15 seconds.

Right handed people have a tendency to wash the left hand more thoroughly (and vice versa).

Wedding Rings

If you wear a wedding ring, it is important you wash underneath it.

Rinse and Dry Hands

Make sure you rinse all the soap off your hands under running water and then dry your hands thoroughly with a clean dry towel, or a paper towel in a communal setting.

When to Wash Hands

- Always wash your hands after visiting the toilet; after changing a baby's nappy; after providing any personal hygiene care to someone; after bedmaking.
- Always wash your hands before eating or handling food.
- If your hands are dirty or contaminated with substances, then wash your hands before going to the toilet, as well as after.

Why Do We Need to Wash Our Hands?

Hands will pick up germs (bacteria) when you handle anything, even though they may appear to be clean, the germs (bacteria) will be there.

Care of the Hands

- Care of your hands is very important.
- Keep nails short and pay particular attention to them when washing your hands.
- Always cover any cuts with a waterproof plaster.
- Avoid the wearing of artificial nails/nail polish as this can discourage vigorous handwashing
- When you can, apply aqueous handcream as this protects your hands and helps prevent dryness and the chapping of hands.