

Hand Hygiene

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

Remove or kill transient organisms and prevent transmission between patients, staff, equipment, and environments.

When to use

Before/after patient contact; before aseptic tasks; after body-fluid risk; after surroundings; after glove removal.

Supplies needed

Alcohol-based hand rub or soap, water, and disposable towels; facility-approved moisturizer.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Keep nails short; remove hand/wrist jewelry per policy.
- Cover cuts; inspect hands for dermatitis.
- Choose soap and water when hands are visibly soiled.
- Use soap and water after caring for C. difficile or norovirus per policy.

● VAULT TIP

Clean hands at the point of care—before touching the patient or clean supplies, not only when entering or leaving the room.

● STEP-BY-STEP

- Alcohol rub: apply enough product to cover all hand surfaces.
- Rub palms, backs of hands, between fingers, fingertips/nails, thumbs, and wrists.
- Continue rubbing until completely dry; do not wipe product off.
- Soap and water: wet hands, apply soap, and lather all surfaces.
- Scrub for at least 20 seconds, including thumbs, fingertips, between fingers, and wrists.
- Rinse with fingertips pointing downward, keeping hands from touching sink.
- Dry thoroughly with disposable towel.
- Use towel to turn off manual faucet and open door if needed.
- Perform hand hygiene immediately after glove removal and whenever contamination is suspected.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Gloves never replace hand hygiene.
- Let alcohol rub dry before touching equipment or ignition sources.
- Artificial nails are restricted in high-risk areas by many policies.
- Report persistent dermatitis; damaged skin increases contamination risk.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Missing thumbs, fingertips, or between fingers.
- Using too little product or stopping before dry.
- Touching faucet after washing.
- Wearing gloves between multiple tasks or patients.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Routine hand hygiene is generally not charted.
- Document patient education when relevant.
- Record exposure/contamination event and cleansing.
- Report skin reactions or compliance concerns per policy.