

# Hand hygiene

## Information for patients and visitors

This leaflet explains why hand hygiene is so important in preventing the spread of infection and gives advice on how to wash your hands properly.

### Why is it important to have clean hands?

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many infections. This is particularly important in a hospital where patients may be very ill and vulnerable to picking up infections. Patients in hospital are more likely to have an opening for an infection to get into the body, such as through a surgical wound or tube like a bladder catheter or IV drip.

Hands can become contaminated with a wide variety of bacteria and viruses through contact with other people, equipment and surroundings, some of which can cause infection. Hands may look clean but germs, which are not visible to the human eye, may be present.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to clean your hands with alcohol hand rub or wash your hands with soap and water.

### When should I wash my hands?

- Before entering or leaving a patient ward area.
- Before and after any contact with a patient.
- After each visit to the toilet.
- Before every meal.
- Before helping someone with their food.
- Before handling, preparing or serving food.
- After coughing or sneezing into the hands.
- When the hands are visibly dirty.

### Types of hand hygiene products

#### Alcohol hand rub

This is a good option if you do not have access to a hand basin. It is effective in killing most organisms on your hands and is easy to use, even on sensitive skin. Hand rub dispensers should be at every bedside and at the entrance to each ward and department. Please tell staff if a dispenser needs topping up.

Alcohol hand rub should not be used when:

- hands are visibly dirty
- you are experiencing vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- you have touched any body fluids

- there is an outbreak of norovirus, *C. difficile* or other diseases that can cause diarrhoea

In these instances, hands must be cleaned with soap and warm water and dried thoroughly.

## **Hand washing**

Using soap and water is a very effective way of removing organisms from your hands and helping to prevent the spread of infection. Use soap and water where there is a reason not to use alcohol hand rub.

## **Hand wipes**

Hand wipes are available for all patients and are particularly useful for patients who cannot easily move from their beds to handwash basins or hand sanitiser dispensers. Please ask a member of staff if you would like some.

## **Skin care**

Frequent handwashing and the use of alcohol hand rub can dry the skin on your hands. We encourage you to use moisturising hand cream.

To protect skin:

- wet hands before using liquid soap
- dry hands thoroughly after washing
- use a hand cream regularly

## **Remember**

It is important to regularly wash your hands even if they are not visibly dirty, as germs cannot be seen with the naked eye.

Ask yourself:

- what am I going to do?
- what have I just done?
- should I wash my hands?

## **How can you and your visitors help to stop infection?**

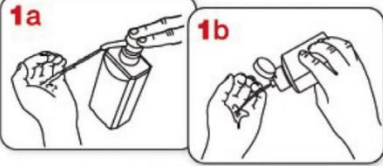
There are several ways you can help to stop infection, especially if you are visiting hospital or someone who is unwell.

- Your visitors should not visit if they feel unwell, or if someone they live with has a cold or flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea and/or vomiting.
- Wash your hands or use alcohol hand rub when entering or leaving a clinical area and regularly in between, even if they look visibly clean.
- Ask healthcare staff for advice before you take food or drink into a healthcare environment.
- Do not sit on patients' beds.
- Do not touch dressings, catheters, or other clinical equipment unless you have received advice or training.
- Inform the person in charge if you think NHS premises are not as clean as they should be.
- If you think a healthcare worker has forgotten to wash their hands, it is OK to ask them to do so.

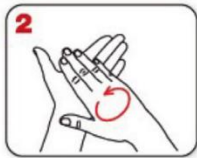
## How to clean your hands

### How to handrub?

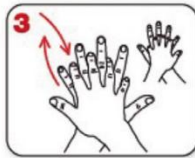
WITH ALCOHOL-BASED FORMULATION



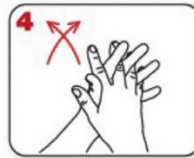
Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand and cover all surfaces.



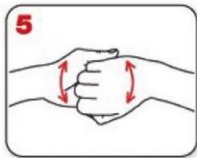
Rub hands palm to palm



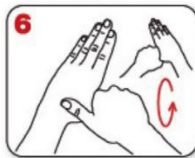
right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



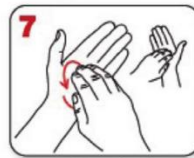
palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



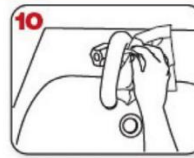
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa



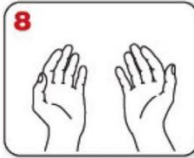
rinse hands with water



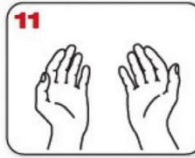
dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



...once dry, your hands are safe.



...and your hands are safe.

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## Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

If you or your carers have any questions about your treatment or any information in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to ask one of the members of the nursing or medical staff on your ward.

You can also contact the Infection Prevention and Control team at our hospital sites:

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill

Tel: **020 3299 8173**

Email: **kch-tr.KCH-IC-Nurse@nhs.net**

Princess Royal University Hospital, Orpington Hospital, Beckenham Beacon and Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup.

Tel: **01689 863459**

Email: **kch-tr.PRUHInfectionPreventionandControlNurses@nhs.net**

## **MyChart**

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.mychart@nhs.net](mailto:kings.mychart@nhs.net). Visit [www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart) to find out more.

## **Sharing your information**

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit [www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk).

## **Care provided by students**

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.access@nhs.net](mailto:kings.access@nhs.net)**