

IPC2.2012 Perform hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infection

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.

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

Version No 2

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

You will need to know and understand:

1. relevant standard infection prevention and control precautions, national legislation/guidance and local policies/procedures
2. health and safety regulations covering your area of work
3. regulations and guidance concerning hazardous substances
4. the chain of infection
5. how hand and wrist jewellery and artificial fingernails and accessories can harbour microorganisms
6. how to access facilities and materials for hand hygiene
7. the situations requiring hand hygiene, the solutions required to achieve hand hygiene and when they are appropriate, and approved techniques for performing effective hand hygiene
8. the importance of keeping your hands healthy and hydrated
9. our own role and responsibilities and the responsibilities of others including patients/service users and visitors
10. how and when to report issues that are within and outside your scope of practice

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

You must be able to do the following:

1. continually assess the need to perform effective hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infection
2. remove wrist and hand jewellery, including wristwatches prior to performing hand hygiene as these harbour microorganisms and may also inhibit effective hand hygiene
3. where you wish to wear plain rings, move them when you are carrying out hand hygiene, in order to reach all microorganisms
4. use either liquid soap or approved hand rub products
5. where you use liquid soap:
 1. wash your hands to achieve effective hand hygiene, ensuring that you use appropriate techniques in accordance with local and national policies/procedures
 2. dry your hands thoroughly using single-use paper/towels or according to local policy/guidelines
6. where approved hand rub products are available or the only option for hand hygiene:
 1. ensure that it is appropriate to use them
 2. follow the manufacturer's instructions on quantity, application and usage
 3. ensure that you use appropriate techniques according to local and national policies/procedures
 4. allow your hands to air dry fully and naturally before carrying out the activity
7. avoid contamination of your hands between hand hygiene and carrying out the activity
8. keep your fingernails short and clean and without nail polish or artificial fingernails and accessories when providing care to others
9. before each working shift, assess your hands for cuts, cracks and breaks in the skin that could harbour microorganisms
10. 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
11. maintain good hand skin hydration by using moisturiser as appropriate
12. report any skin problems to your line manager, Occupational Health or your General Practitioner so that appropriate treatment can be undertaken
13. should you encounter problems with the facilities and supplies for hand hygiene, that you are unable to remedy, inform the person responsible for them and ask them to take action

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This National Occupational Standard was developed by Skills for Health.

This standard links with the following dimension within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004):

Dimension: Core 3 Health, safety and security