Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Hand Hygiene

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Hand Hygiene

Patient, Visitor and Carer Information

Infection Prevention and Control Team

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Introduction

This information leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about hand hygiene. It explains the different ways to clean your hands and how, by undertaking hand hygiene, you can help reduce infections in hospital, both for yourself and others.

As a result of contact with other people, equipment or surroundings, hands can become contaminated with a wide variety of bacteria and viruses (germs), some of which can cause infection. Hands may look clean but germs, which are not visible to the human eye, may be present. Effective hand hygiene plays a very important role in the prevention and control of infection in healthcare settings.

Types of hand hygiene

Hand Washing

Hand washing with soap and water is commonly undertaken in the hospital setting. This is sufficient for general, social contact, and most clinical care activities. Hand washing is used to maintain personal hygiene and must always be used when hands are visibly dirty.

It is important to wash your hands:

- Before handling food, eating, drinking, or taking medicines
- If you are a patient and have diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- If you are visiting a patient who is experiencing diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- After using the toilet, bedpan, or commode
- After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose

- If you are visiting a patient who has any symptoms of cough or Influenza (Flu)
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After handling waste/rubbish
- After gardening
- After changing a nappy
- Before and after touching wounds, intravenous drips or changing a dressing
- When they are visibly dirty
- Before and after visiting someone in hospital.

Hand Sanitiser (alcohol hand rub)

Hand sanitiser (alcohol gel) is more effective than soap and water provided hands are visibly clean before application. Hand sanitiser is applied directly onto dry hands. It must not be used when experiencing diarrhoea and/or vomiting, or visiting a patient with these symptoms. Hand sanitiser dispensers are in key locations within the clinical area where patient care is undertaken.

As hand sanitiser has a limited effect on germs causing vomiting and diarrhoeal illnesses, it is especially important to wash your hands with soap and water before entering and when leaving a clinical area where there are patients experiencing symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting.

Hand cleansing wipes

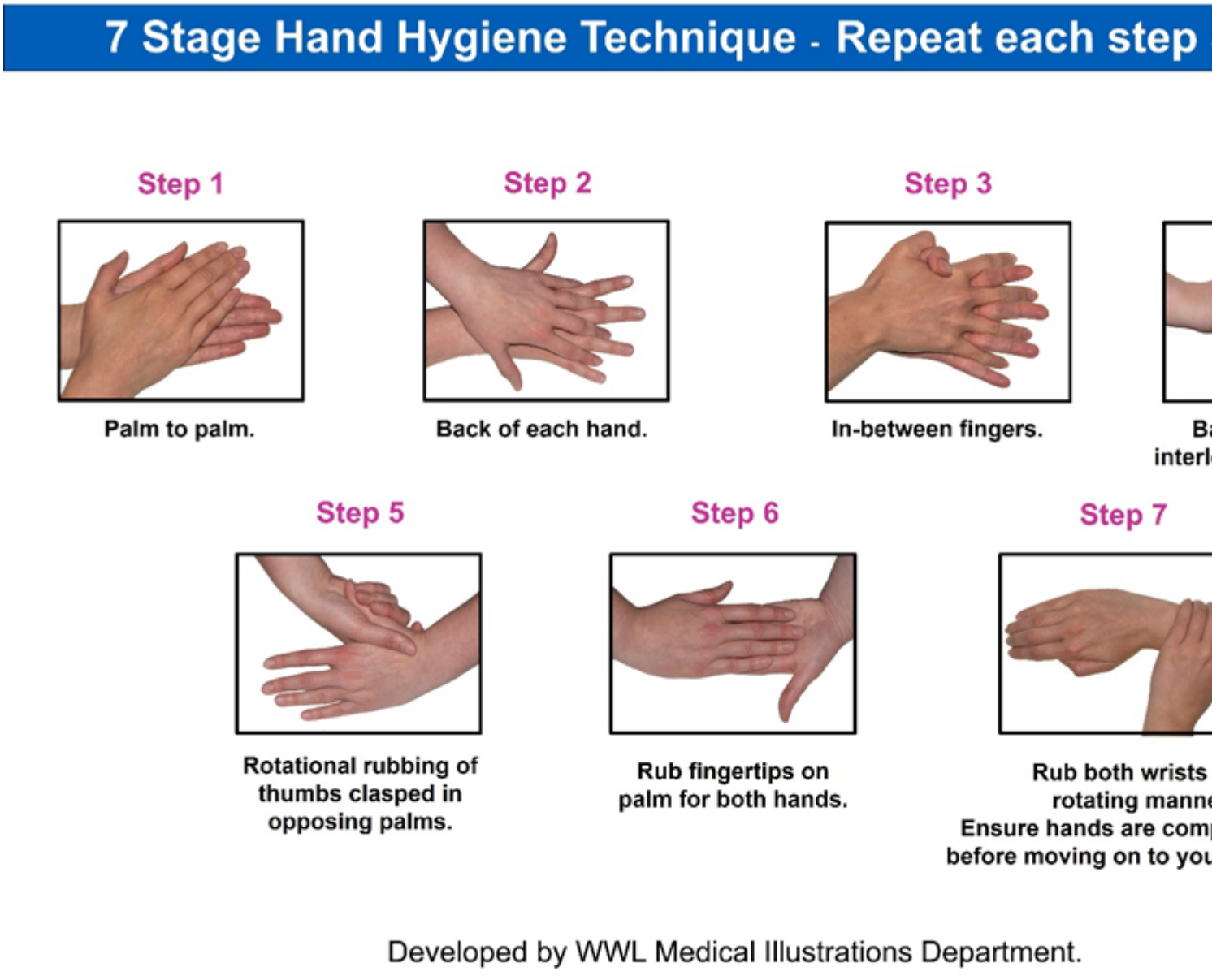
Hand wipes are available for all patients in hospital and are particularly useful for patients who cannot easily access hand wash basins or hand sanitiser; please ask a member of staff if you would like some.

Hand hygiene technique

Wet hands with tepid running water before applying soap.

Drying your hands thoroughly is very important. Where possible use disposable paper towels or try to change your hand towel daily.

The correct method of washing your hands is shown below:



Hand Care

If done correctly, the hand washing steps shown in this leaflet will help you to:

- Undertake hand hygiene correctly, using the 7 stage had hygiene technique.
- When using hand sanitiser, use the same 7 stage technique that you would use when washing hand with soap and water.

- Reduce the risk of cross infection to you and others
- Reduce the risk of the skin on your hands becoming sore.

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.

The inpatient areas will have adequate hand washing sinks and han gel dispensers around the ward areas, including entering and exiting the ward.

Ask yourself:

- What am I going to do?
- What have I just done?
- Should I wash my hands?

How you can help to stop infection

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

- Do not visit if you feel unwell, or if someone you live with has a cold or flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea and/or vomiting.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser 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, use the available chairs allocated on the ward
- Do not touch dressings, catheters, or other clinical equipment unless you have received advice and 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.



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