

Hand hygiene information

For patients, visitors and staff in healthcare settings

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

The importance of hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most important method of preventing and controlling the spread of infections. It is extremely important that all staff, patients and visitors have clean hands.

We are often asked why there are no handwashing facilities or gel in dispensers in the front entrance of the hospital. This is because preventing cross infection relies on washing hands/using gel at the times described below.

There are two main ways to clean your hands – either washing them with soap and fresh running water or using alcohol hand gel (sanitiser).

How staff, patients and visitors can help prevent the spread of infections

- Staff must adhere to 'bare below the elbows' (BBE) and the '5 moments for hand hygiene'.
- Patients must be given the opportunity to clean their hands regularly using soap and water, hand/wet wipes or alcohol hand gel if appropriate.
- Patients and visitors should always wash their hands after using bathroom or toilet facilities, before eating food, after coughing or sneezing into their hands or when their hands are visibly dirty.

Washing your hands with liquid soap and water

- Wet your hands under running water and apply liquid soap.
- Rub your hands together, ensuring all areas are covered (as shown in the diagram below).
- Rinse thoroughly under running water.
- Dry your hands thoroughly using a disposable paper towel or automated hand dryers.

- Dispose of used paper towels in an appropriate waste bin. Waste bins in hospitals will be foot-operated pedal bins. These help to prevent recontamination of your hands by lifting the lid of the bin.

Using alcohol hand gel

- Alcohol hand gel should only be used on hands that are not visibly dirty.
- Apply alcohol hand gel to your (dry) hands.
- Rub your hands together, ensuring all areas are covered (as shown in the diagram below).
- Allow the disinfectant hand gel to dry on your hands.

Remember 'it's OK to ask' and it's everyone's responsibility to remind

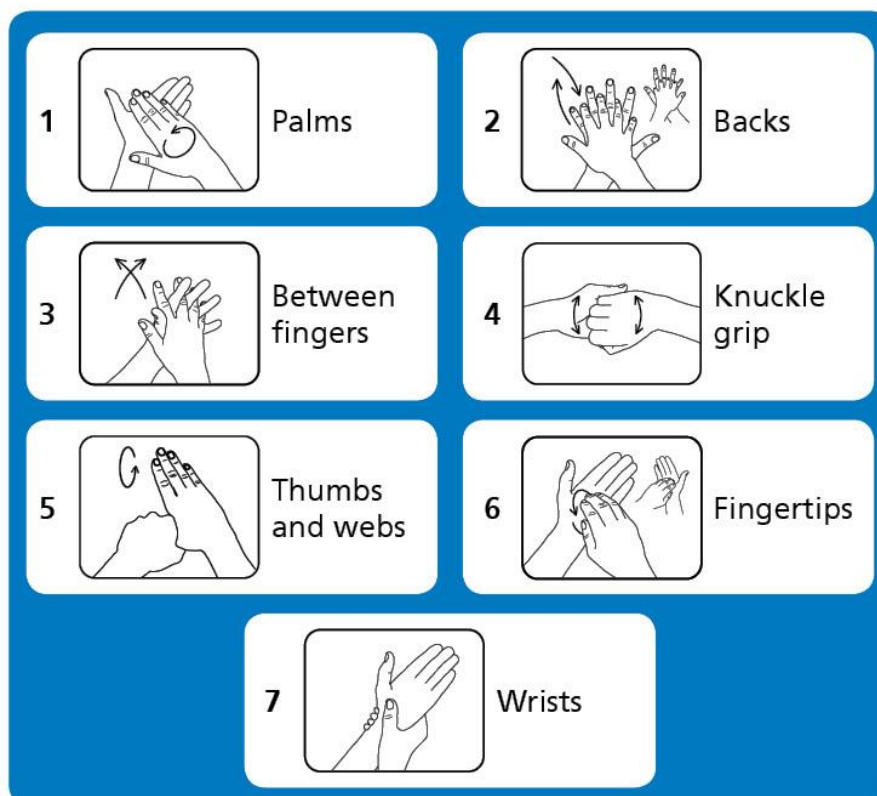
As a patient in a hospital, you should expect to see staff clean their hands before and after they provide care to you. If you think a staff member has forgotten, 'it's OK to ask'!

If you would like to clean your hands but can't get to a sink, staff can assist by providing hand/wet wipes or alcohol gel as appropriate.

Staff have a responsibility to remind colleagues if they think they are not 'bare below the elbows', not cleaning their hands correctly or not cleaning their hands when they should.

Hand hygiene technique

Good hand hygiene only takes 20 seconds



More information

For more information about hand hygiene, please speak to a member of your care staff, who may also contact the infection prevention and control team for you.

**Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.
Patients have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare-associated infections.**

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Patient Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.patientopinion.org.uk.

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