

# Action saves lives

WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY

5 MAY 2026

Primary Care



## WHY WASH HANDS?

- About 80% of infectious diseases are transmitted by unclean hands touching contaminated surfaces
- Organisms left on surfaces can survive for minutes, hours, days and even weeks
- Organisms multiply! A single bacterium can multiply into more than 16 million in 8 hours
- Hands encounter around 10 million organisms per day
- Humans have approx. 1,500 bacteria living on each square centimetre of skin on their hands. Underneath fingernails and between fingers can harbour even more
- People touch their face on average 23 times an hour, risking infection transmission to eyes, nose and mouth
- Research shows that if everyone routinely washed their hands, a million deaths a year could be prevented
- The most common microbial contaminants from hands in health care include skin commensals and pathogens – MRSA, CDI, VRE, E. coli
- Unclean surfaces can harbour millions of organisms. Portable medical equipment is a significant source of transmission, as are computer keyboards. Mobile phones are a hazardous microbial platform, housing bacteria, fungi, protists, viruses and bacteriophages

## HOW TO HAND WASH

1. **WET** hands with running water
2. **SOAP** your hands and lather up
3. **RUB** all over your hands, between your fingers and thumbs for 20 seconds
4. **RINSE** hands under running water
5. **DRY** hands using paper towel

## HOW TO HAND RUB

1. Apply one full pump of ABHR to your palm
2. Cover all surfaces of the hands and wrists
3. Perform rotational rubbing of fingertips in the palm of the other hand
4. Rotational rubbing of both thumbs
5. Rub hands until dry

## WHEN

### BEFORE

- Entering or leaving a healthcare facility, clinical or personal environment
- Touching a patient/client
- Touching animals and pets including therapy animals
- Handling medicines
- Preparing/eating food
- Touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Preparing a bottle
- Donning gloves

### AFTER

- Removing gloves
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Going to the toilet
- Touching animals and pets including therapy animals
- Changing a nappy
- Assisting another person with toileting/personal hygiene



5



## THE 5 MOMENTS

1. **BEFORE** touching a patient/client
2. **BEFORE** a procedure
3. **AFTER** a procedure
4. **AFTER** touching a patient/client
5. **AFTER** touching a patient or client's surroundings



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