




It is important to pay particular attention to the following areas which have been shown to be those most commonly missed following handwashing.

-  Most frequently missed
-  Less frequently missed
-  Not missed

Ref: NICE, *Infection Control, Prevention of healthcare associated infection in primary and community care 2003*



## Preventing Healthcare Associated Infection

# Handwashing

Information leaflet for patients,  
relatives and carers

Handwashing is the simplest  
and easiest way of preventing the  
spread of infection and disease

**Good hand hygiene can prevent the spread of infection**

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## Why should I wash my hands?

Hands may look clean but invisible micro-organisms (germs) are always present, some harmful, some not. Removal of micro-organisms is important to prevent them from being transferred to other people

**Handwashing is the simplest and easiest way of preventing the spread of infection and disease!**

## When should I wash my hands?

- Before entering and leaving a hospital or care home.
- Before entering a ward or isolation area.
- Before and after preparing food.
- Before meal times.
- After visiting the toilet or changing nappies.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Before and after carrying out physical care, e.g. handling body fluids, emptying a urinary catheter bag, dressing a wound or wearing medical gloves.

## General hand care

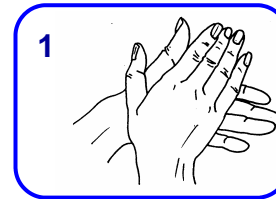
- Keep nails short, to prevent bacteria (germs) growing under nails.
- Dry hands well to prevent chapping.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing.
- Use hand cream to protect hands from chapping.

## How do I wash my hands?

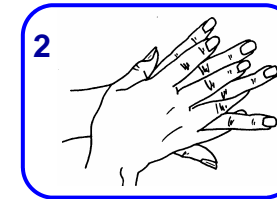
Ideally remove all wrist and hand jewellery (if you wear a wedding ring it is important that you wash underneath it). Wet hands under running water, apply soap and rub vigorously for approximately 10-15 seconds covering all surfaces of the hands, rinse under running water and dry thoroughly.

## Handwashing technique

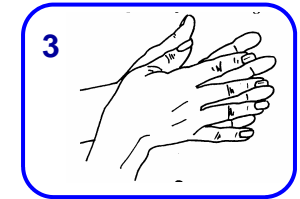
The following six steps describe the best way to effectively wash your hands and should take about 10-15 seconds:



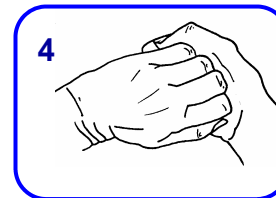
Palm to palm



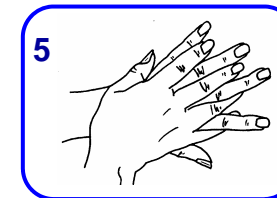
Rub backs of both hands



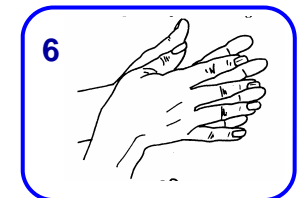
Palm to palm, fingers interlaced



Rub backs of fingers (interlocked)



Rotational rubbing of both thumbs



Rub both palms with finger tips

- If you are visiting a hospital or care home establishment you may be asked to use an alcohol handrub.
- This is a practical and acceptable alternative to handwashing with soap and water.
- The solution should be applied to all areas of the hands using the 6 steps above until the solution dries (approx. 15 seconds).