

Clean Hands Count Campaign: Improving Healthcare Provider Hand Hygiene

Blog Posting

Practicing hand hygiene is a simple yet effective way to prevent infections. Cleaning your hands can prevent the spread of germs, including those that are resistant to antibiotics and are becoming difficult, if not impossible, to treat. On average, healthcare providers clean their hands less than half of the times they should. On any given day, about one in 25 hospital patients has at least one healthcare-associated infection.

Hand Hygiene remains the single most important infection control intervention in the healthcare provider's arsenal. National hand hygiene compliance rates for healthcare providers hover around 40%, which leaves tremendous opportunity for improvement. Hand hygiene can be accomplished using either an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or traditional antiseptic soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are the most effective agents to reduce the number of microorganisms on the hands of healthcare providers. When hands are not visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are the preferred method for cleaning the hands in the healthcare setting. This is important between caring for multiple patients, but also after touching potentially contaminated equipment such as endoscopes or equipment used during special procedures. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Because the hands of healthcare providers remain the number one source for contamination and potential transmission of healthcare associated infections, healthcare providers must have a consistent focus on improving hand hygiene. Hand hygiene dispensers should be readily accessible in all patient care areas. The use of gloves does not eliminate the need for hand hygiene.

To learn more about the CDC Clean Hands Count campaign, please visit www.cdc.gov/handhygiene.

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