

WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY 2023

The Power of Infections Control is in Our Hands

Hand hygiene is a method of hand cleansing that significantly minimizes the presence of possible pathogens (harmful germs) on the hands. Hand hygiene is a basic yet efficient method of preventing infections in both the healthcare environment and the community.

Furthermore, research has also revealed that good hand hygiene practices are the most effective strategy to prevent the spread of germs in healthcare settings and in the wider community. Yet only 35% of people in West Africa have access to basic handwashing facilities at home. Similarly, according to a WHO and UNICEF (2015) report on water, sanitation, and hygiene in healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries particularly in Africa, many healthcare facilities lack access to hand hygiene facilities.

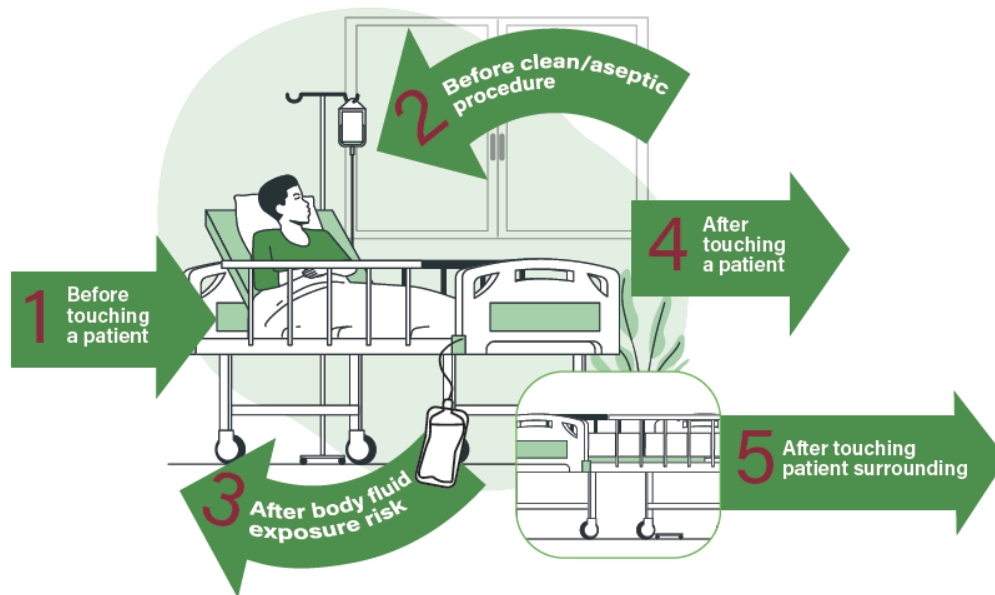
The COVID-19 outbreak in the Gambia has also shown that transmission can be reduced by washing hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based sanitizer. “Hand hygiene is one of the most efficient interventions to prevent the spread of diseases since it targets the most common mode of transmission,” stressed Dr. Buba Manjang Gambia's National Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Focal Point (FP).

Africa CDC is conducting IPC trainings for healthcare workers through the West Africa Regional Coordinating Centre to enhance IPC implementation in line with this year's theme “Accelerate Action Together”. To ensure the practice of proper hand hygiene and IPC in healthcare settings, it is essential that people at all levels understand the significance of these measures in preserving lives. Healthcare workers, caregivers and patients alike must commit to achieving correct practices and attitudes regarding hand hygiene.

When to wash your hands?

Hand hygiene contributes to strengthening infection prevention and control in healthcare settings and a critical role in maintaining public health. Washing your hands at key times such as before and after preparing food, eating food, using the toilet, changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, touching animals, animal feed, or animal waste and touching garbage are important strategies to “accelerate action together”.

Five Moments of Hand Hygiene



Hand hygiene must be performed in all indications described below regardless of whether gloves are used or not.

Tips to wash your hands the right way

Wash your hands for at least 40-60 seconds using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing a minimum of 60% alcohol for 20 – 30 seconds. To ensure proper hygiene practice the following steps when washing hands;

1. Wet your hands with warm or cold running water, turn off the water, then apply soap.
2. Lather your hands with soap by rubbing them together. Massage the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails with soap.
3. Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds.
4. Thoroughly rinse your hands with clean, running water.
5. Use a clean towel or an air dryer to dry your hands.

You can avoid the need for antimicrobials if you practice good hygiene such as regular handwashing with soap and water and proper environmental sanitation to prevent or reduce the spread of infections



Let's join forces to promote better hand hygiene and help strengthen Infection Prevention and

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Control protocols in health settings. Washing hands is a powerful tool to stay healthy and protect ourselves from infections!

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About Africa CDC

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is a continental autonomous Public Health agency of the African Union which supports Member States in their efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, prevention and control of diseases.

Learn more at: <http://www.africacdc.org>

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