

Hand Hygiene FAQs for Long Term Care Facilities

Q) What method of hand hygiene is recommended for healthcare workers?

A) CDC [recommends the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers](#) as the primary method for hand hygiene in most healthcare situations. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers effectively reduce the number of germs that may be on the hands of healthcare workers. Healthcare personnel often clean their hands more than 7 times in an hour. Some germs can be difficult to remove with soap and water and scrubbing can damage their skin. Healthcare personnel should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty, before eating, after using the restroom, and after caring for people with infectious diarrhea during outbreaks.

Q) How does handwashing with soap and water remove germs and chemicals?

A) Soap and water, worked into a lather, trap and remove germs and chemicals from hands. Wetting your hands with clean water before applying soap helps you get a better lather than applying soap to dry hands. A good lather forms pockets called micelles that trap and remove germs, harmful chemicals, and dirt from your hands. Lathering with soap and scrubbing your hands for 20 seconds is important to this process because these actions physically destroy germs and remove germs and chemicals from your skin. When you rinse your hands, you wash the germs and chemicals down the drain.

Q) Do I really need to wash my hands for 20 seconds?

A) Scientific studies show that you need to scrub for 20 seconds to remove harmful germs and chemicals from your hands. If you wash for a shorter time, you will not remove as many germs. Make sure to scrub all areas of your hands, including your palms, backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your fingernails.

Q) How do hand sanitizers work differently than handwashing?

A) [Alcohol-based hand sanitizers](#) work by killing germs on your hands, while washing your hands with soap and water removes germs from your hands. Handwashing will remove all types of germs from your hands, but hand sanitizers are not able to kill all types of germs or remove harmful chemicals like pesticides and heavy metals.

Q) How does hand hygiene fight antibiotic resistance?

A) Hand hygiene helps stop the spread of germs, including ones that can cause antibiotic-resistant infections. [Antibiotic resistance](#) happens when germs like bacteria and fungi develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them. That means the germs are not killed and continue to grow. Infections caused by antibiotic-resistant germs are difficult, and sometimes impossible, to treat. Keeping your hands clean by washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer is one of the best ways to prevent germs from spreading and avoid infections.

CDC Hand Hygiene Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/faq/index.html>

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