



The Importance of Proper Hand Hygiene



Proper hand hygiene is the first step in infection control which includes hand washing and/or disinfecting hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Cleaning the hands is the single most important action which everyone can do to reduce the spread of germs (5) (1). It is best practice to wash the hands for at minimum 15 to 20 seconds with mild soap and warm water when the hands are visibly dirty. All surface area of the hands should be cleaned to include the front and back of both hands, between the fingers and under the fingernails (1).



Alcohol-based hand sanitizers, with a minimum of 60% alcohol, are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) as the preferred way to clean hands when they are not visibly soiled. Using alcohol-based sanitizers is a convenient and fast way of cleansing hands, resulting in less skin irritation and dryness (5) (1) (4).



The effectiveness of alcohol-based hand sanitizer requires good technique, to include applying the manufactures recommended amount of the solution, then rubbing both hands together covering all surface area until all the solution has dissolved. Both the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers and washing with soap and water throughout the day are suggested when providing direct personal care to individuals (1) (4).

The Exception

The only exception to the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer is when coming into contact with bacterial spores of *C. diff* (*Clostridium difficile*) because not all the spores are killed by the alcohol-based hand sanitizers. If, or when, hands are exposed to *C. diff* it is most important to wash hands with soap and water to dislodge all bacterial spores before touching other surfaces or individuals to avoid the spread of these infectious germs (1).

Caregivers should be educated on how to recognize *C. diff* when they come into contact with the bacteria. *C. diff* is a foul smelling, mucous filled, runny, watery diarrhea which is typically the result of several courses of antibiotics which disturb the flora and fauna in the gut (1).

Wearing gloves is not a substitute for proper hand hygiene. Hand hygiene supplies should be made available in direct care settings (2).

Factors that Reduce the Effectiveness of Good Hand Hygiene

- Jewelry such as bracelets and rings can be contaminated with infectious germs. Rings can puncture or tear gloves, and/or cause gloves to not fit properly. In the event bracelets cannot be removed they should be pushed as far up on the wrist as possible to allow for proper cleansing of the hands. Reducing the amount of jewelry worn while providing direct personal care will decrease the chance of spread germs to others. (3).
- Dry cracked damaged skin on hand can trap infectious germs becoming a mode of transmission. Open sores, cuts, and abrasions on the hands should be covered prior to providing direct care. To help skin on hands stay healthy and well hydrated the use of barrier creams or lotions is recommended after hand washing or using alcohol-based sanitizers (3).
- Fingernails have been shown to harbor higher numbers of microorganisms, up to nine times greater in artificial nails and extenders. Cracked and damaged nail polish increase the number of infectious germs on the hands. Long, sharp fingernails can puncture and tear gloves causing exposure to germs (3).
- Using extremely hot water to wash hands removes protective oils and increases the likelihood of damage to skin. Using water alone is not adequate in removing dirt or infectious germs, a sufficient amount of soap is required (3).

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019, November). Hand hygiene in healthcare settings: Show me the science. *National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID), Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (DHQP)*, 1-2.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022, November). CDC's core infection prevention and control practices for safe healthcare delivery in all settings. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID), Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (DHQP)*, 1-6.
3. Doyle, G.R. and McCutcheon, J.A. (2015, November). Clinical procedures for safer patient care: 1.3 Hand hygiene and non-sterile gloves. *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License*, 1-14.
4. Ramadan, F. (2023, April). Infection prevention and control: a guide for community nurses. *British Journal of Community Nursing*, 28(4), 184-186.
5. World Health Organization (WHO). (2009, August). Hand Hygiene: Why, How & When? *Patient Safety*, 1-7.

ABA Snippets ...



Behavior Contrast and Grandma's Cookie Jar

Chuck is allowed to eat two or three cookies whenever he passes Grandma's cookie jar. Sometimes Grandma sees him and sometimes she doesn't.

One day grandma makes a new rule, Chuck is only allowed to have one cookie at a time. Chuck follows the new rule when Grandma is watching. Grandma is happy until the jar needs to be refilled ahead of schedule. If Chuck is eating fewer cookies, then where are they going?

Grandma did not account for behavior contrast. Behavior contrast happens when something changes in one situation causing a behavior to increase or decrease, and the opposite behavior change happens in a similar but different situation. In this case when Grandma limited cookies, Chuck started taking more when she wasn't looking.

Situation 1:

Cookie Jar + Grandma = 1 cookie for Chuck (decrease)

Situation 2:

Cookie Jar – Grandma = 4 or more cookies for Chuck (Increase)

Behavior contrast may happen across different locations or with different people. Increasing reinforcement in one setting may impact behavior in another setting. A change at a day program may affect behavior at home. Having different rules between two shifts at a group home could result in behavior contrast. Encouraging a healthy diet at home may result in unhealthy choices in the community.

It is important to consider behavior contrast when assessing behavior or when developing behavior change interventions.

The origin of Grandma's cookie jar comes from Cooper et al., 2020, p338.

You can contact DBHDS by emailing brian.phelps@dbhds.virginia.gov with any questions or suggestions. You may contact DBHDS about these efforts via the following:

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References

Cooper, J.O., Heron, T.E., & Heward, W.L. (2020). Positive Punishment. In J.O. Cooper, T.E. Heron, & W.L. Heward (Eds.). *Applied behavior analysis: third edition* (pp.337-338). Pearson Education, Inc.

App of the Month



Wash Your Hands! has one goal—to help you get in the habit of washing your hands more often. We touch so many surfaces over the course of the day, and our hands pick up the germs on every single one, potentially infecting us and spreading disease to those around us. What better way to pick up a habit than an occasional nudge? Customize how often you get reminder notifications. Choose what times of day you get reminder notifications. Start a handwashing timer and see just how long you should be scrubbing right from a reminder notification. (App of the Month is not endorsed by DBHDS Office of Integrated Health Supports Network. User accepts full responsibility for utilization of app).

Don't Wait! Get The FLU Vaccine!



Individuals with developmental disabilities are at high risk of severe complications from the flu, including hospitalization and death. Risk is further elevated if the individual also has a history of:

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Emphysema
- COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder)
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Mobility disorders
- Swallowing difficulties
- Asthma
- Kidney disease

The Flu vaccine is the best protection against flu. The Flu vaccine reduces severity of illness, length of illness and lowers risk of a hospital admission due to complications.

Caregivers and family members can add an additional layer of protection for individuals by also getting a flu vaccine.

[Flu: What To Do If You Get Sick](#)

If an individual already has flu symptoms, call their PCP (Primary Care Provider) as soon as symptoms are noticed, so the individual can be treated with antivirals.

Antiviral drugs can make flu symptoms milder, can shorten the length of the illness, and can reduce risk of more serious complications.

Find the nearest vaccine site [here](#).

[CDC's Frequently Asked Questions About the Flu.](#)

References

1. [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention \(n.d.\). Find flu vaccines.](#)
2. [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention \(2023, Aug. 5\). Frequently Asked Influenza](#)
3. [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention \(2022, Sep. 15\). Flu & People with Disabilities \(Flu\) Questions: 2022-2023 Season | CDC](#)
4. [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention \(2022, Dec. 15\). Frequently Asked Influenza Flu: What To Do If You Get Sick.](#)

Happy Thanksgiving from the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network

