

Hand Hygiene

What is hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene is the action of cleaning hands. There are two ways to clean hands, using an alcohol based hand rub, which kills organisms in seconds or, when hands are visibly soiled, using soap and water.

Why is hand hygiene so important?

Hand hygiene is an important practice for health care providers and has a significant impact on reducing the spread of infections in hospitals. Hand hygiene is an important part of safety and patient care and involves everyone in the hospital, including patients and health care providers.

Effective hand hygiene practices in hospitals play a key role in improving patient and provider safety, and in preventing the spread of health care-associated infections.

Why are hand hygiene rates being publicly reported?

One of the most common way of reducing health care-associated infections in a health care setting is good hand hygiene practices by health care providers. Health care providers move from patient to patient and room to room while providing care and working in the patient environment. This movement provides many opportunities to spread organisms from patient to patient if hands are not cleaned between care. Monitoring hand hygiene practices is vital to improving rates and reduce health care-associated infections.

How are hand hygiene rates calculated?

Before Initial Patient/Patient Environment Contact:

Number of times hand hygiene performed before initial patient/patient environment contact, divided by number of observed hand hygiene indications before initial patient/patient environment contact, multiplied by 100.

After Patient/Patient Environment Contact:

Number of times hand hygiene performed after patient/patient environment contact, divided by number of observed hand hygiene indications after patient/patient environment contact, multiplied by 100.



Healthcare workers are washing their hands, but we want to continue to do it better, as we learn more about hand hygiene best practices.

Hand hygiene rates are reported annually because behavioural and cultural change takes time. Therefore reporting hand hygiene rates more regularly than annually may not produce results that will indicate significant change or an impact on hand hygiene practices.

What are we doing to improve Hand Hygiene and patient safety at Hamilton Health Sciences?

Patient safety remains the most important priority for our hospital; this involves ensuring the patients are not at risk for contracting healthcare associated infections. Our Hand hygiene program is comprehensive and follows the provincial guidelines for hand hygiene in healthcare settings.

A comprehensive multi-faceted hand hygiene approach is used to support proper hand hygiene such as ensuring fast and easy access to hand hygiene products, staff, patient and visitor education programs and audits and feedback. Improvement initiatives and strategies are ongoing.

Hand hygiene involves everyone in the hospital, including patients and visitors. Hand cleaning is one of the best ways you and your health care team can prevent the spread of many infections

HHS Hand Hygiene Percent Compliance Results by Site

Percent compliance prior to initial patient contact with HCP

HHS Site	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
All Sites	79	84	82	82
HGH	76	81	82	81
JHCC	75	84	81	80
MUMC	88	87	84	86
SPH	84	88	83	82
WLMH	71	68	66	73

Percent compliance following patient contact with HCP

HHS Site	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
All Sites	88	88	87	86
HGH	87	88	86	85
JHCC	87	87	88	87
MUMC	91	87	87	87
SPH	89	91	85	84
WLMH	87	82	82	84