



Germs. Wash your hands of them.



Introduction:

Hand hygiene should be performed at a range of times to ensure hands are clean and safe. However, in order to prevent HAI at the most fundamental times during care delivery and daily routines, when caring for those who are sick and vulnerable, the guidance laid out in World Health Organisation's (WHO) 'Your 5 moments for hand hygiene' should be followed. These moments provide key opportunities for those providing care as to when to perform effective hand hygiene to prevent the spread of microorganisms. The 'Your 5 moments for hand hygiene' is part of the National Hand Hygiene Campaign, Germs. Wash your hands of them, and part of the HPS Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure (more information on hand hygiene can be found in this or in local policies).

The aims of this document are to enhance understanding of when hands should be decontaminated in relation to the 5 moments and to provide guidance for those auditing hand hygiene compliance against the 5 moments to further support a consistent approach when scoring. The examples given have been provided alongside the original information provided by WHO following a collaborative exercise with LHBCs who co-ordinate their NHS Board hand hygiene compliance activities.

Notes:

- Two opportunities for hand hygiene can in some cases present at one time, e.g. when moving from one patient/client to another in the same care area. During this time if hand hygiene has just been performed for moment 4 (after patient contact) this eliminates the need to perform hand hygiene again for moment 1 (before patient contact, but only if no contact has been made with surroundings or others in between times. The same applies to after contact with patient surroundings (moment 5) and before patient contact (moment 1).
- Even if gloves have been worn, hand hygiene must still be performed following removal as hands may be contaminated beneath gloves, or upon removal of these.
- Remember that hand hygiene may have to be performed between tasks on the same patient.
- Remember that after touching for example your own face, including mouth and nose, you should perform hand hygiene, before you deliver any patient/client care.
- For the purposes of this document the term hand hygiene refers to the process of cleaning hands by performing hand washing or using alcohol based hand rubs/gels.

Moment	When and Why	Examples
1. Before patient contact	<p>When? Clean your hands before touching a patient when approaching him or her.</p> <p>Why? To protect the patient against harmful germs carried on your hands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After leaving a piece of desk work, for example at the nurse's station, or after handling notes, bedding, equipment or furniture, <u>before</u> you approach a patient/client to deliver care • After arriving at work for example having had contact with your car, public transport or the healthcare environment, e.g. when changing into uniform, <u>before</u> you have any patient/client contact • Or after any item in the patient or healthcare zone* has been touched since the previous hand hygiene episode, <u>before</u> you have any patient/client contact¹ <p>(If working for example in the ambulance service, after driving or working in the vehicle, before patient contact)</p>
2. Before an aseptic task	<p>When? Clean your hands immediately before any aseptic task.</p> <p>Why? To protect the patient against harmful germs that can be living in the environment or be living on hands, including the patient's own germs, entering his or her body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting in a urinary catheter, peripheral vascular line or central line, performing venepuncture, managing intravenous lines/infusions, giving injections, tasks that involve contact with non intact skin including wounds²
3. After body fluid exposure risk	<p>When? Clean your hands immediately after an exposure risk to body fluids (and after glove removal).</p> <p>Why? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs that can live in body fluids.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning up urine or blood spillages, following venepuncture, emptying bedpans, commodes or urine bags, after contact with catheters, after performing chest suction or aspiration of any other body fluids³

4. After patient contact	<p>When? Clean your hands after touching a patient and his or her immediate surroundings when leaving.</p> <p>Why? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs that may live on patient's skin or clothing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping a patient/client out of bed, taking a blood pressure, pulse or temperature, examining a patient/client, examining an intravenous site or a dressing⁴ • Or after you have any patient/client contact, <u>before</u> any item in the patient or healthcare zone is touched (If working for example in the ambulance service, after patient contact, before driving or working in the vehicle)
5. After contact with patient surroundings	<p>When? Clean your hands after touching any object or furniture in the patient's immediate surroundings when leaving – even without touching the patient.</p> <p>Why? To protect yourself and the health-care environment from harmful patient germs that are known to live in the immediate surroundings such as bed, bedside table etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After making a patient's/client's bed, completing notes/records kept in their surroundings, for example in folders, handling equipment including pumps and monitors, bedding, curtains trolleys/lockers¹

* In some circumstances, a healthcare zone might be considered to be the patient's immediate environment which is often described as within 3ft (1mt)

1. It can be unrealistic at times to expect those in the care environment to perform hand hygiene every time they touch an item. However, it can often be clear when hand hygiene is essential before the next activity/patient contact. Some examples include:
 - If a member of staff has gathered all the patient notes to make recordings, having undertaken this procedure they must perform hand hygiene prior to their next activity (washing hands each time after a patient's notes have been touched for this exercise would be unrealistic. It is however expected that after touching an individual's notes at the bedside, hand hygiene will be performed before moving on the next activity).
 - when cleaning is being undertaken in a specific ward/dept area it would be unrealistic to expect hand hygiene to be performed every time for example a bed or locker is moved for this exercise, however it would be expected that after cleaning a defined area, e.g. a four bedded bay, hand hygiene would be performed before moving on to the next area.
2. Remember even if you have performed hand hygiene before gathering your equipment and going to the bedside to do a procedure, you should perform hand hygiene before any actual patient contact.
3. Remember that alcohol based hand rubs/gels cannot be used alone when hands have been soiled. It is important that when *Clostridium difficile* or viral gastroenteritis is known or suspected hand washing is performed.
4. Staff must assess the risks associated with all patient/client contact. If considerable 'social' contact has been made staff should consider the importance performing hand hygiene before moving on the next task/patient.

NB the length of time between performing hand hygiene has not been described. What is important is to focus on the Your 5 moments and perform hand hygiene as has been described to prevent the spread of microorganisms that may cause harm.