

Don't Consider Gloves a Replacement for Hand Hygiene

Questions are coming up about proper hand hygiene...now that more hospital pharmacy techs are interacting with patients.

When should I perform hand hygiene? Do it before AND after direct contact with a patient's skin...and after contact with objects or surfaces near them.

For example, clean your hands if you shake a patient's hand when introducing yourself prior to taking a med history...or touch a patient's bed rail or wheelchair handle.

Be aware that your hospital may also require you to perform hand hygiene before entering and after exiting patient rooms or care units.

How should I clean my hands? Alcohol-based rubs are best in most cases. Apply about a teaspoonful to cover all surfaces of your hands...then rub for about 20 seconds or until your hands are dry.

If your hands are visibly soiled, wash them with soap and water instead. Fill your palm with soap...scrub your hands and fingers for 15 to 20 seconds before rinsing...then dry them completely.

Are gloves a substitute for hand hygiene? No...they only help REDUCE contamination. When you wear gloves, make sure to change them between patients...since gloves can carry contaminants.

And always perform hand hygiene after removing gloves.

Follow your hospital's policy on wearing gloves and other garb...and for hand hygiene...when you have contact with patients in isolation for "*C. diff*," "MRSA," "VRE," etc.

Learn more about how to keep dangerous bugs from hitching a ride on you with our CE, *Hand Hygiene for Infection Control: Getting Cleaned Up*.

Key References:

http://www.shea-online.org/images/guidelines/SHEA_hand.pdf.

http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/6/2015_NPSG_HAP.pdf. <https://www.shea-online.org/images/patients/CDI-hand-hygiene-Update.pdf>. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5116.pdf>.

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