

## **“Hand washing indications and techniques for nurses”**

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An appropriate technique for hand cleansing is critical, and except when hands are visibly soiled, alcohol based hand rubbing is recommended rather than soap and water. This presentation outlines an effective hand washing technique and provides indications for when hand washing should occur. The aim is to influence hand hygiene behaviour among nurses and encourage improved hand washing.

Health care associated infections affect hundreds of millions of patients worldwide each year; resulting in serious illness, prolonged hospital stays and long term disabilities. Hand washing is easily the most modifiable measure to significantly reduce these infections and pathogen cross contamination. Despite extensive educational programs and literature on the significance of hand hygiene, and the improved availability of hand washing facilities, compliance among health care workers remains low. The result is that cross contamination and infection rates continue to remain high across all health care settings.

All patient care activities can result in hand contamination, requiring regular washing of hands. Hand washing should occur before and after procedures or patient care activities, when preparing medication or food, before commencement of shifts, when entering or leaving the ward, after removal of gloves and before handling sterile stock. If there is any doubt, hands should be washed. Indications for hand washing are closely linked to the sequential steps involved in cross contamination of pathogens, therefore effective hand washing is the most effective action in breaking the chain of infection.