

Bug Bingo: Clean Hands Save Lives!!

Why Are Clean Hands Important?

Clean hands are the most effective way to prevent the spread of **germs**. Germ spread in a nursing home community can make residents, visitors, and staff **sick**. Residents are at high risk of getting sick because of their age and health conditions. So clean hands save lives!

There are two ways to make sure your hands are clean (called **hand hygiene):**

- **Soap** and **Water**: soap and water are best used when hands are visibly soiled, **AFTER** using the **bathroom**, **BEFORE** handling or **eating** food. Soap and water are also the best way to wash your hands if you have a germ called **C. diff** or **Norovirus**. Both germs cause **diarrhea** and are very tough and resistant!
 - To wash your hands with soap and water, you want to 1) wet your hands, 2) apply soap and **rub** your hands for **15 to 20 seconds**, 3) **rinse** your hands with water, and 4) use a disposable **towel** to **dry** your hands and if possible, shut off the faucet.
- **Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR)**: this is the preferred method in most situations as alcohol is very effective at breaking down the building blocks of germs like **proteins**. Using an ABHR that is at least **60%** but no higher than **95%** alcohol is best.
 - To use ABHR, you want to 1) apply the rub on all parts of your hands, including the **palms**, **fingers**, between the fingers, and the front of your hands, and 2) rub your hands until they are dry (about 20 seconds). Do not dry your hands by **shaking** them or rubbing them on your **clothes**!

When Should You, Staff, and Visitors Clean Their Hands?

Hand hygiene should be done in these five important moments:

- **BEFORE direct contact** with a resident. For example, when providing personal care to a resident, taking their **vitals** like blood pressure, or **entering** a resident's room.

- **BEFORE** clean tasks or moving from **dirty to clean** areas. For example, when preparing an **injection** or **medications**, after changing underclothes and putting on new underclothes.
- **AFTER** contact with **blood** or **body fluids** and removing personal protective equipment (**PPE**). For example, after touching a **wound** dressing and taking off **gloves**.
- **AFTER** direct contact with a resident's **living space**, like their room. For example, when **leaving** a resident's room.
- **AFTER** contact with **objects** used to care for a resident. For example, medical equipment like blood pressure cuffs or bed linens.

Using ABHR from the **dispenser** by your room when entering and leaving is a great way to start!

How Can We Make Sure Everyone is Cleaning Their Hands?

Staff must receive **training** every year on how and when to clean their hands and show they know how and when to clean their hands. **Staff know that using gloves does not replace cleaning their hands!!**

Residents and their visitors should also get training on when to clean their hands. For residents, this includes before eating, after using the bathroom, and after they **cough** or **sneeze**. For visitors, this includes before and after direct contact with a resident or before entering a resident's room and when leaving a resident's room.

There should always be enough **supplies** for everyone to clean their hands. Let your staff know if there is no ABHR in the dispenser or if you need ABHR in the pocket-sized dispenser or a **wipe**.

What Do Clean Hands Have to Do with Residents' Rights?

Residents have the right to **participate** in their care, and that includes getting the care needed to achieve the highest possible level of health. Residents can ask staff to use ABHR before and after leaving their rooms and providing care.

Residents have the right to **voice concerns** to any staff if they do not clean their hands.

Nursing home communities should **empower** residents to speak up! They have a right to voice concerns and receive a **timely** response without the **fear** of discrimination or retaliation.

References:

- CDC Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training Course. Module 7 – Hand Hygiene of the Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training Course.
https://www.train.org/cdctrain/training_plan/3814
- The Texas Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office. Residents' Rights.
https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/news_info/ombudsman/rights.html