

Respiratory and cough hygiene in healthcare Settings



i Important information for patients requiring information on cough hygiene.

About this booklet

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information about cough hygiene and simple ways to stop infection spreading.

Introduction

Bacteria and viruses (germs) can be found in many places on animals, on raw foods, in the water and in or on people. Most germs are harmless but some that are spread by the airborne or “coughing” route can cause respiratory infections including colds, influenza and tuberculosis.

Please ensure that you do not “share” your germs by coughing directly in to the room or over people – cover your nose and mouth with a disposable paper handkerchief. Then throw the soiled tissue into the nearest waste container and wash your hands.

Respiratory and cough hygiene

Respiratory and cough hygiene is designed to minimise the risk of cross-transmission of respiratory illness (pathogens):

- Cover the nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing the nose.
- Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin.
- Wash hands with non-antimicrobial liquid soap and warm water or alcohol based hand rub after coughing, sneezing, using tissues, or after contact with respiratory secretions or objects contaminated by these secretions.
- Hand wipes **should not** be used by staff in the hospital/care setting for hand hygiene unless there is no running water available. Staff may use hand wipes followed by ABHR and should wash their hands at the first available opportunity.
- Keep contaminated hands away from the eyes, nose and mouth

Staff should promote respiratory and cough hygiene helping those (e.g. elderly, children) who need assistance with this, e.g. providing patients with tissues, plastic bags for used tissues and hand hygiene facilities as necessary.

How do I clean my hands?








Even when hands appear clean the germs will still be there and this is why performing hand hygiene correctly is so important. To perform hand hygiene effectively you need warm water, soap, and disposable paper towels.

- All the surfaces of both hands should be covered with the product.
- Remember to pay special attention to the finger tips, thumbs and between the fingers as these areas are frequently missed.
- Rinse your hands well under clean running water and then dry thoroughly using a clean paper towel.

Healthcare workers

You should expect all healthcare workers to wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) prior to entering your room or providing care for you and/or others. If healthcare staff fail to perform hand hygiene, do not be afraid to ask them to do so.

Hand hygiene technique

						
Palm to palm.	Right palm over left hand and vice versa.	Interlace fingers of right hand over left and vice versa.	Back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.	Rotational rubbing, forwards and backwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.	Rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm and vice versa.	Grasp left wrist with right hand and work cleanser into skin then vice versa.

If using ABHR, rub hands and wrists for at least 15 -20 seconds.
If using soap and water, the procedure should take one minute.

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