



Respiratory and cough hygiene in healthcare settings

Reviewed: May 2025
Next review: May 2026
Version 8

> About this leaflet

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

> 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 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 hand rub 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?

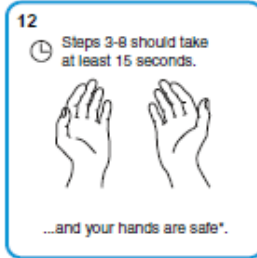
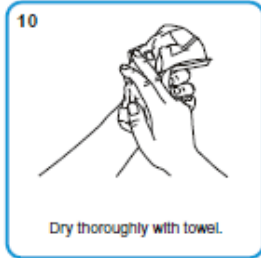
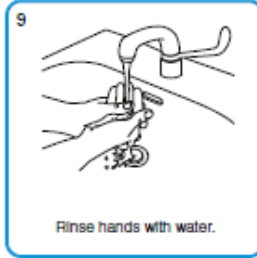
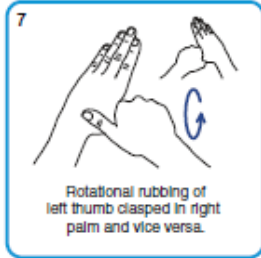
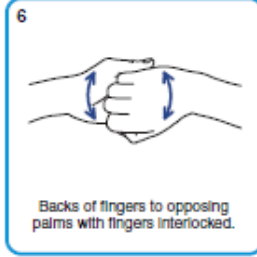
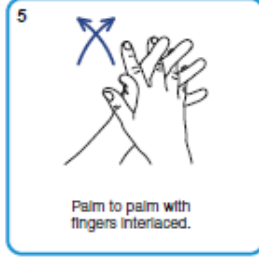
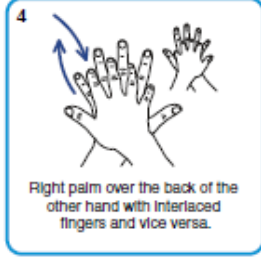
Even when hands appear clean the germs will still be there and this is why performing hand hygiene correctly is so important. To perform hand hygiene effectively you need warm water, soap, and disposable paper towels.

- 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 a hand rub 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



If using hand rub, rub hands and wrists for at least 20-30 seconds.

If using soap and water, the procedure should take 1 minute, and hands should be dried thoroughly.

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