

# Handwashing and Skin Care

## *Simple Steps to Stop the Spread of Germs*

### **Clean hands keep everyone healthy and safe**

Keeping your hands clean is the best way to prevent getting and spreading germs. You and your family should clean your hands often, especially before eating, after using the toilet and after touching surfaces that may contain germs.

There are two different ways to clean your hands:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.
- Rub your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub (at least 60% alcohol) for at least 15 seconds. Hand rubs are a good choice when soap and water are not available, but they don't kill all types of germs.

Visitors and patients may either use the sanitizers that staff use, or they can ask for a product from nursing staff.

### **Our commitment to you**

As health care workers, we are committed to preventing the spread of germs and providing a safe environment for you and your family. We encourage you to take an active role in your and your family's care. **It's okay and encouraged to ask your health care provider if they've cleaned their hands before caring for you.**

### **Using soap and water**

#### **Best times to use soap and water:**

- When hands look dirty
- Before eating
- After going to the bathroom, changing diapers or touching bodily fluids like blood, urine and vomit
- After touching animals or pets

#### **Tips for using soap and water:**

1. Use warm water and plenty of soap. Work up a good lather.
2. Clean the whole hand, under your nails, between your fingers, and up the wrists.
3. Wash for at least 15 seconds (say the ABCs or sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
4. Rinse your hands well under running water to remove soap.
5. Dry your hands well. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the bathroom door.
  - Keep soft paper towels or a clean, dry cloth near the sink.
  - **Remember:** Damp towels may harbor germs.

## Using an alcohol-based hand rub

### The best times to use alcohol-based hand rub:

- When soap and water are not available.
- Before and after caring for a loved one.
- Before and after entering a hospital, clinic or a patient's room.
- Before and after contact with someone who is very sick, very old or very young.
- After touching something that may contain germs (used tissue, bed rails, bedside tables, remote control or the phone).
- After shaking or holding hands, especially if the other person has a cold or other illness.
- After coughing, sneezing or using a tissue.

### How to use an alcohol-based hand rub:

1. Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers.
4. Rub until your hands are dry.

You will know that you have used enough if it takes at least 15 seconds to dry on your hands.

## Skin care

Sometimes, dry skin occurs in spite of our best efforts. Signs of dry skin may flaking, redness, itching, burning, or cracking. Cracked or broken skin can increase your chance of infection.

- **To treat dry skin:** Apply lotion or cream after bathing when your skin is damp. Also apply it throughout the day if needed.
- **To help prevent dry skin:**
  - Wear gloves and warm clothing when it is cold out.
  - Wash your hands with warm (**not** hot) water.
  - Wear rubber gloves when handling cleaning products.