

Hand hygiene

A guide for patients and visitors of the
Townsville Hospital and Health Service

Working together

Your healthcare worker should always perform hand hygiene in front of you. If you did not see them do this, please feel free to remind them.

We can all play a major role in stopping the spread of infections to our family and friends.

How can I get more information?

For further information please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 4433 1181.

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This patient information brochure supports National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 3 - Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infections.



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Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the single most important factor in reducing hospital-acquired infections.

Our hands may look clean but many germs are invisible to our eyes. We can unknowingly transmit germs on our hands to others and our environment.

Why do hand hygiene?

When we are fit and healthy we can usually defend ourselves against many germs.

Often our natural defences are weakened when we are not well, or after an operation.

It's very important that each time you visit someone in a healthcare facility you clean your hands, even if your hands look clean.

Healthcare associated infections can result in:

- Illness
- A longer stay in hospital
- Slower recovery
- Additional stress for all concerned.

When should you clean your hands?

Hand hygiene is a general term referring to the use of soap and water or a waterless hand rub to cleanse your hands.

It is important to perform hand hygiene as you enter and leave a healthcare facility and also:

- After going to the toilet
- After blowing your nose
- After smoking
- After handling/patting animals
- Before, during and after preparing food
- When your hands are visibly dirty.

Using alcohol-based hand rubs

When hands are visibly clean:

- Remove excess jewellery
- Squirt enough hand alcohol foam to cover both your hands
- Roll to distribute over palms, back of hands and between fingers
- Rub hands together until dry
- Hand alcohol foam is available in all patient care areas and in high-traffic public areas.



Using soap and water

When hands are visibly dirty:

- Remove excess jewellery
- Wet hands with water
- Apply soap
- Rub all over
- Rinse off with water
- Pat hands dry with paper towel
- Dispose of paper towel into the bin.

Hand basins are located throughout The Townsville Hospital. Ask a staff member for directions if necessary.