

Hand Hygiene

This information sheet is aimed at providing some background information and advice on the matter of good hand hygiene.

According to a number of experts, without a vaccine, the single most important thing you can do to prevent getting the flu is to wash your hands. It also contributes significantly to the reduction in the transmission of other viruses and bacteria.

It is therefore a useful tool in the prevention of ill health and good hand hygiene is to be encouraged within the workplace.

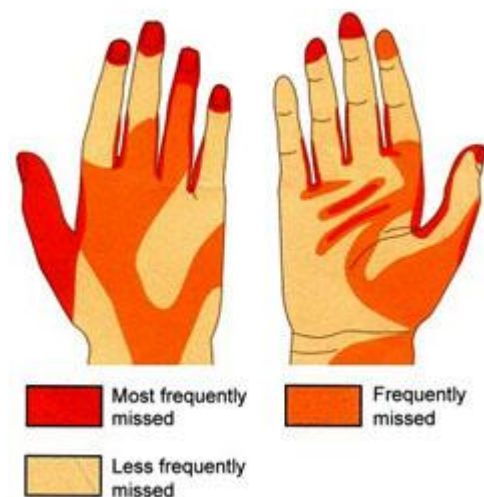
Some facts about hand hygiene and washing hands

- Sickness absence costs employers £495 a year in direct costs for every worker employed. Indirect costs are probably considerably more (CBI 2005 statistics).
- Norovirus – a common form of sickness and diarrhoea can result in individuals being off work for up to four days.
- We have between 2 and 10 million bacteria between fingertip and elbow.
- The number of germs on your fingertips doubles after you use the toilet.
- Germs can stay alive on hands for up to three hours.

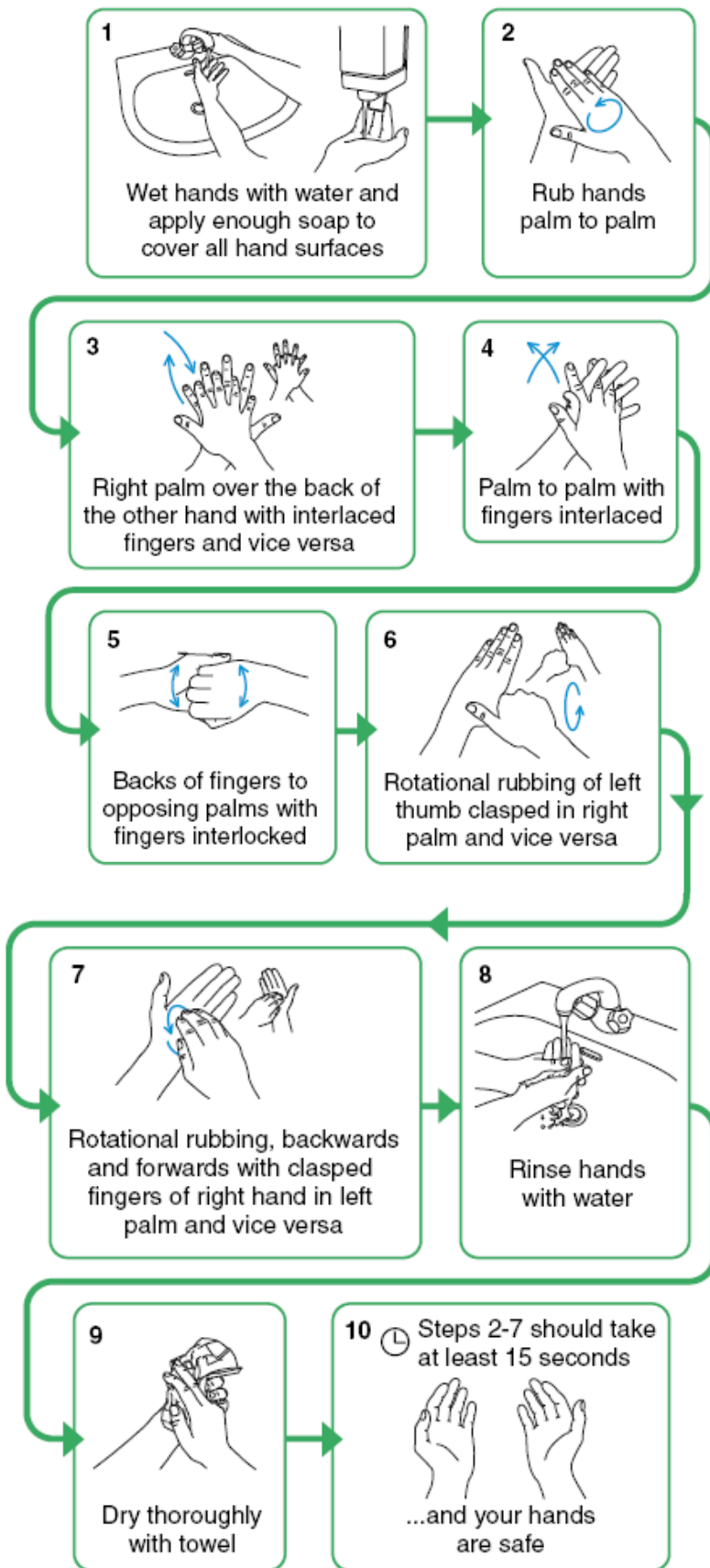
Hand Washing

Whilst we may all know about the importance of washing hands there it is often the case that we do not spend enough time or use the correct techniques to wash our hands. This gives some bacteria and viruses the opportunity to continue spreading. The remainder of this information sheet gives some advice and guidance on the recommended techniques for washing hands.

A page dedicated to hand hygiene can be found on CONNECT. This can be found within the “health” pages of the employee health and safety area. It includes media files that will help you to understand how to wash your hands and how best to use the alcohol gel that can be found in some workplaces and public places etc.



How to wash your hands



So washing your hands properly is one of the most important things you can do to help prevent and control the spread of many illnesses.

Good hand hygiene will reduce the risk of things like flu, food poisoning and healthcare associated infections being passed from person to person.

It takes at least fifteen seconds to wash your hands properly – this is about the length of time it takes to sing ‘Happy Birthday to You’ twice through! Follow the hand washing guide on this page in order to play your part in reducing the risk of transmission

When do I need to wash my hands?

The hands normally carry lots of germs and should be washed:

- after visiting the toilet;
- before handling food;
- when the hands are visibly dirty;
- after coughing or sneezing into your hands.

Source: World Health Organisation

Further information at support can be obtained from **Safety & Wellbeing team**
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