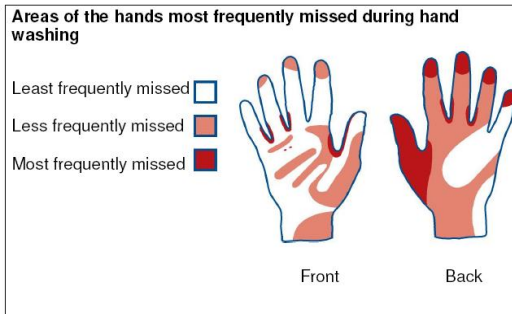## How should I wash my hands?

Using soap with warm water.

- Wet your hands with warm water. Apply a small amount of soap onto your hands.
- Rub your hands together until soap forms a lather and then rub all over your hands including your thumbs, in between your fingers and the area around and under the fingernails.
- Rinse your hands well under running warm water.
- Dry your hands using a paper or clean towel. Hot air dryers can be used in public areas.

Using alcohol hand Gel

- You may use this if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Use enough alcohol hand gel to coat your hands and rub together making sure that all parts of the hands are covered.
- See picture below for parts of the hands that are most often missed when cleaning hands.

Areas of the hands most frequently missed during hand washing

Least frequently missed ☐
Less frequently missed ☐
Most frequently missed ☐

Front   Back

To prevent the spread of hospital infections.

Use soap and hot water:

1. When your hands look dirty
2. After you use the bathroom
3. Before you eat

Use an alcohol-based hand rub or gel:

1. When your hands look clean
2. If soap and water are not available
3. Follow ward staff instructions as soap and water are better at removing some germs that cause infections (e.g, Clostridium difficile)

How can I contact a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team?

Tell the Clinical Nurse Manager or nurse looking after you if you would like to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team and they will contact us.

Additional information can be found at : http://intranet.tuh.ie/departments/IPC/Pages/home.aspx

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication.

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Tallaght University Hospital
Ospidéal Ollscoile Thamhlachta
An Academic Partner of Trinity College Dublin

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

The Importance of Hand Hygiene

Why is cleaning our hands so important?

Following admission to Irish hospitals, approximately 1 in 20 patients acquire an infection.

Infection acquired/ picked up in hospitals can be harder to treat.

The good news is that these germs are easily removed by hand washing with soap and warm water **or** using an alcohol hand rub if hands are visibly clean.

You can help protect yourself by asking staff and visitors to clean their hands.

Why is hand hygiene important in hospitals?

Hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections, including the common cold, flu, and even the hard-to-treat infections such as MRSA.

Hand hygiene is the single most important method of preventing the spread of infection.

Cleaning your hands doesn't take much time, but it is a big help in stopping infections and illness. Please remember that even if hands look clean, they can carry bacteria and viruses this is why you need to clean your hands regularly in the hospital and also at home.

How often should you clean your hands? We ask all patients and visitors to follow the advice below.

Patients:

Please clean your hands:
- Before eating
- After using the toilet, bathroom or commode
- Before leaving your room and ward area
- Avoid visiting other patients unless agreed with the nursing staff
- Remind your visitors to clean their hands
- If you cannot get to a sink or reach the alcohol hand rub ask your nurse or care assistant for detergent hand wipes before you eat and after using the toilet or bedpan.

Visitors:

- Please clean your hands when you enter the hospital and before and after visiting a patient
- If you visit someone in hospital do not sit on their bed .
- Do not visit the hospital if you have colds or flu, stomach bug or any other infection

It is important that all healthcare staff clean their hands before and after contact with patients. If you are ever worried that a healthcare worker has forgotten to clean their hands it is ok for you to remind them.