



Proper hand hygiene vital for infection control

According to the CDC, hand hygiene is the most important measure to prevent the spread of infections among patients and dental healthcare personnel (DHCP). Education and training programs for OMS staff should thoroughly address indications and techniques for hand hygiene practices prior to performing routine and oral surgical procedures.

Q What are the key recommendations for hand hygiene in dental settings?

A OMS staff should perform hand hygiene:

- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After barehanded touching of instruments, equipment, materials and other objects likely to be contaminated by blood, saliva or respiratory secretions.
- Before and after treating each patient.
- Before putting on gloves and again immediately after removing gloves.

For routine examinations and nonsurgical procedures, staff should use water and plain soap (hand washing), antimicrobial soap (hand antiseptics) specific for healthcare settings or an alcohol-based hand rub. If hands are visibly soiled (e.g., dirt, blood, bodily fluids), soap and water should be used. For surgical procedures, staff should perform a surgical hand scrub before putting on sterile surgeon's gloves. Practice staff should be sure to follow the product manufacturer's label for instructions for all types of hand hygiene products.

Q Are training resources available to help educate OMS staff on the importance of hand hygiene?

A CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings Video Series covers the four E's of an effective hand hygiene program – engage, educate, execute and evaluate. With this training, practice staff will learn:

- Foundations for engaging all healthcare personnel in hand hygiene.
- Best practice techniques and practical tips for educating staff.
- How to create accountability among personnel.
- How to use data for action as a basis for continuous quality improvement.

Additionally, the course Hand Hygiene and Other Standard Precautions to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections reviews key concepts of hand hygiene and infection control practices



that healthcare personnel use to reduce transmission of microorganisms in healthcare settings.

To access these training videos and additional resources, visit [CDC.gov/clean-hands/hcp/training/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/hcp/training/index.html).

Q What are the CDC hand hygiene recommendations for fingernails and jewelry?

A To maintain fingernail and jewelry safety, natural nails should not extend past the fingertip. It is recommended that DHCP do not wear artificial fingernails or extensions, as germs can live under artificial fingernails both before and after using alcohol-based hand sanitizer and handwashing. Additionally, some studies have shown that skin underneath rings may contain more germs than fingers without rings.

Q How can a practice make hand hygiene a priority for all OMS staff?

A To help make hand hygiene a priority for the OMS practice and staff:

- Require all personnel to perform hand hygiene based on CDC recommendations.
- Ensure all staff perform hand hygiene with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled.
- Ensure the appropriate supplies for adhering to hand hygiene recommendations are easily accessible.

For more information, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). ■