

Human Resources

Occupational Health and Hygiene Guidance

Document Management No.	
Author	██████████
Date Written	April 2009
Date Ratified	
Date for Review	
Version No.	
Managers Handbook Reference	



South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Occupational Hand Hygiene Guidance

INTRODUCTION

1. Hand hygiene remains the single most important means of preventing and controlling the spread of infections.
2. Performing hand hygiene means the physical removing of visible dirt, soiling e.g. blood and body fluid and removal of harmful micro-organisms. Preventing the spread of infection via the hands by removing transient organisms, or reducing them to a level where they no longer pose a threat to others or surfaces touched.
3. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership¹, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason either directly or indirectly.

PURPOSE

- To set standards for hand hygiene across the Organisation
 - To encourage consistency of hand hygiene practice
 - To promote compliance
 - To help reduce the risk of the spread of infection within the Organisation and Stake Holders
4. All employees are responsible for preventing and controlling the spread of infection by adopting appropriate hand hygiene techniques. Visitors to the Organisation should be encouraged to wash their hands or use the alcohol based hand rubs provided.

WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS

- You should make regular and thorough hand washing part of your daily routine, especially:
 - Before eating, drinking or handling food, or beverages
 - After using the toilet
 - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
 - Before and after smoking
 - After touching animals or animal waste
 - Before and after touching a sick or injured person
 - Before and after visiting a hospital ward
 - After any training or operational/support role where you may have been in contact with chemicals or micro-organisms

¹ The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private organisations. For further information on the Partnership see www.dignityatwork.org

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CLEANSING AGENTS

5. **Liquid soap**, in sealed disposable cartridges, and water is effective for the removal of physical dirt or soiling. This will remove transient micro-organisms and render the hands socially clean.
6. **Alcohol hand rubs**, provide a useful alternative when there is a need for rapid hand disinfection, or when access to facilities is difficult or inconvenient.

HAND HYGIENE TECHNIQUE

7. **Liquid Soap:**
 - Wet hands first using warm water. Remove hands from under the running water
 - Apply soap and rub hands together vigorously (not under running water) for a minimum of 10-15 seconds, ensuring contact with all areas of the hands and wrists. Pay particular attention to thumbs, fingertips between fingers, and under any rings, as these are the areas most commonly missed (see appendix 1)
 - Rinse hands thoroughly under warm running water, removing all lather
 - Dry thoroughly with paper towels
 - Use elbow to turn taps off, if elbow mixer taps are available. If not use a paper towel
 - Dispose of paper towels in domestic waste bin. Use the foot pedal of waste bin to lift the lid of the bin, **NOT YOUR CLEAN HANDS**
 - Nail brushes should not be used, unless sealed for one use only
8. **Alcohol Gel:**
 - Apply 1-2 shots of alcohol gel to dry hands
 - Rub hands together for a minimum of 10-15 seconds, ensuring contact with all areas of the hands and wrists. Pay particular attention to thumbs, fingertips, between fingers and under any rings, as these are the areas most commonly missed (see appendix 1)
 - Rub hands vigorously until all the rub evaporates and the hands are dry
 - Do not use alcohol gel as a soap substitute during hand washing
9. Seek Occupational Health advice if a particular liquid soap or alcohol based product appears to be causing skin irritation.
10. Regular application of hand cream (emollients) will protect the skin from the drying effects of regular hand hygiene.

**If you require any further guidance on this document, please contact
Human Resources or Occupational Health Nurse Advisor**

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APPENDIX 1

