Hand Hygiene 101

Hand hygiene is the single most important means of preventing healthcare-acquired infections.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- 80% of all infectious diseases are transmitted by touch.
- The CDC reports that on average, healthcare providers clean their hands less than half of the times they should.
- Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds, not specifically 15 seconds.
- Soap and water remove germs from hands, but they cannot kill germs. Soap and water work by mechanically removing microbes from your hands.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer kills most, but not all, bacteria and viruses on contact. Make sure to use enough alcohol-based hand sanitizer to cover all surfaces of your hands, and rub until dry. Hands should stay wet for approximately 20 seconds if you use the correct amount of sanitizer.
- Hand sanitizer is not effective against *C. difficile*, a common healthcare-associated infection. Always use gloves when caring for patients with *C. difficile*. To prevent the spread of *C. difficile*, wash your hands with soap and water after touching potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitizer does NOT cause antibiotic resistance. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill germs quick and in a different way than antibiotics. There is no chance for the germs to adapt or develop resistance.
- The areas most often missed by healthcare providers when cleaning their hands are the thumbs, fingertips and spaces between fingers. We use these parts of our hands for contact with surfaces and people. Your hand hygiene affects patients wherever they go, so correct hand washing technique is critical for the health and well-being of our patients and the community.
- Wet hands are more likely to spread germs than dry ones. Always make sure to properly dry your hands after washing.
- In addition to the flu vaccine, the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of flu is to wash your hands. Flu season is upon us, and proper hand hygiene is essential to guard against the flu. If you are sick, stay at home. If you begin to feel sick while at work, go home as soon as possible.