Hand hygiene is the #1 way to prevent the spread of infections.

Why? To prevent the spread of germs, take action by practicing hand hygiene regularly and by asking those around you to practice it as well.

When? Clean your hands often, especially after touching objects or surfaces in the hospital room, before eating and after using the restroom. Your healthcare providers should practice hand hygiene every time they enter your room.

How? Take 20 seconds and use either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub to kill the germs that cause infections.

Which? Use soap and water when your hands look dirty; otherwise, you can use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Who? You, your loved ones and your healthcare providers can make a difference by practicing hand hygiene often.

Remember... Infection prevention is in your hands!

Heywood Hospital
Member of the Heywood Healthcare Family

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Hand Hygiene Saves Lives

A Patient Guide

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Infection Prevention: It's in your hands!

A message from Jeannie Sanborn, RN, BS, MS, CIC
Director of Infection Prevention & Control

Preventing infections at Heywood Hospital is a priority. We continuously work to safeguard our patients, visitors, employees and volunteers from infections. Heywood has made a firm commitment to educate staff, patients and the community about the importance of hand hygiene and other infection control initiatives aimed at maintaining a safe and healing environment. **Infection prevention is a team sport.** Please partner with us to stamp out infections.

Do you know?

- Washing your hands, also called hand hygiene, is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections, including the common cold, flu and even hard-to-treat infections, such as methicillin-resistant Staphyloccus aureus, or MRSA.

- In the United States, hospital patients get nearly 2 million infections each year. That's about one infection per 20 patients!

- You can take action by asking both your healthcare providers and visitors to wash their hands.

- You can partner with your healthcare team to make a difference in your health!

When to Wash

- Before, during and after preparing food

- Before eating

- Before and after caring for someone who is ill

- Before and after treating a cut or wound

- After using the bathroom

- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom

- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing

- After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste

- After touching garbage

Hand Hygiene

When it comes to hand hygiene, not only can healthcare workers make a difference, but patients can also help stop the spread of infection by practicing proper hand hygiene and encouraging visitors to do the same. Hand hygiene can be done using soap and water to physically remove germs when hands are visibly dirty or have blood or body fluid contamination. Hand hygiene can also be accomplished with an alcohol-based hand agent or towelette if the hands are not visibly soiled.

How to Wash

With soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with warm water, Use liquid soap if possible. Apply a nickel or quarter-sized amount of soap to your hands.

2. Rub your hands together until soap forms a lather, then rub all over the tops of your hands, in between your fingers and under/around your fingernails.

3. Continue rubbing your hands for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.

4. Rinse your hands well under running water.

5. Dry your hands using a paper towel if possible. Then use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door if needed.

With alcohol-based hand rub:

1. Apply product to the palm of your hand.

2. Rub hands together, in between fingers and thumb and then drag fingers across each palm.

3. Continue to rub hands together until dry.

With a towelette:

1. Open packet, and unfold wipe.

2. Wipe entire hand, front and back, in between fingers, thumb and nail beds.

3. Repeat on opposite hand, and discard wipe.