Hand Hygiene for all Healthcare Workers

**Purpose:** To prevent the transmission of microorganisms from patient to patient and from inanimate surfaces to patients by the hands of all healthcare providers.

**Audience:** All employees of a health care facility (ex. hospitals and clinics, contract workers, volunteers, and students)

### Hand Hygiene Policy

Hand hygiene shall be practiced before and after each patient contact (even if gloves are worn). All employees are required to wash, rinse, and dry their hands or apply an alcohol hand rub before beginning work, after using the rest room and prior to leaving work.

For routine patient care (contacts) liquid lotion soap in the dispenser shall be used for handwashing.

Antiseptic (antimicrobial) handwashing products or alcohol hand rub shall be used for hand hygiene prior to performance of high risk procedures such as insertion or manipulation of an invasive device or minor surgical procedures. Hand hygiene will be performed after contact with patients or their environment.

An alcohol hand rub may be used for hand hygiene in place of an antimicrobial soap handwash. Hands that are grossly contaminated must be washed with lotion soap prior to hand disinfection with an alcohol hand rub.

Gloves shall be worn when exposure to blood or any other body fluids, excretions or secretions is likely.

For a given patient, site care shall start at the cleanest site (e.g., mouth care) and progress to the dirtiest site (e.g., urinary catheter care). When going from a dirty site to a clean site, hands shall be washed or an alcohol hand rub applied between sites.

### Routine Handwashing Procedure

- Use warm water to wet the hands.
- Apply lotion soap.
- Work up a good lather.
- Apply with vigorous contact on all surfaces of the hands.
- Wash hands for at least 15 seconds.
- Rinse, avoid splashing.
- Keep hands down so that run off will go into the sink and not down the arm.
- Dry well with paper towels and use the paper towels to turn off the faucet.
- Discard the paper towels into the appropriate container.

### Hand Antiseptics

For hand washing, substitute an antimicrobial soap for the lotion antiseptics soap.

An alcohol hand rub may be substituted for antimicrobial soap. The following technique should be used:

- If hands are visibly soiled, wash hands with lotion soap prior to application of alcohol hand rub.
- Apply enough alcohol hand rub to cover the entire surface of hands and fingers.
- Rub the solution vigorously into hands until dry.
- Use of alcohol hand rubs may result in a sticky residue on the hands. Wash with lotion soap periodically to remove the hand rub residue.

### Fingernails

Healthcare workers with direct patient contact must maintain their fingernails so that the tips of the nails do not extend past the ends of their fingers. The nail surface should remain smooth. Artificial nails/wraps or acrylic overlays are not permitted. Nail polish must not be chipped or cracked.

### Hand Antisepsis Prior to Surgical Procedures

Healthcare workers who participate in surgical procedures must either perform a surgical scrub with an antimicrobial soap or hand and arm disinfection with an alcohol rub prior to donning sterile gloves and a surgical sterile gown. If hands and arms are not grossly contaminated between cases, an alcohol rub may again be applied to hands and arms in place of a surgical scrub. If, at any time, hands are contaminated, they must be washed with an antiseptic soap and water or washed with lotion soap and water followed by application of an alcohol hand rub.

**Note:** Bottles and other large containers of hand lotions may become contaminated with pathogenic organisms. Therefore, only small disposable bottles or packets of lotions shall be used.

### Allergic Contact Dermatitis

Allergic reactions to products applied to the skin may present as delayed contact type reactions or less commonly as immediate reactions.