

Appendix 2: Hand Hygiene Guidelines for Healthcare Workers

(Adapted from Guidelines for [Hand Hygiene in Irish Health Care Settings 2005](#), HPSC)

Social Hand Hygiene

Use plain soap and warm water, or an alcohol hand rub product (which should **only** be used on **visibly clean hands**). When hands are visibly contaminated with dirt, soil or organic material, hands **must** be washed with warm water and soap.

Social hand hygiene should be used:

- At the beginning and end of the work shift.
- Before and after each patient contact.
- After moving from a contaminated to a clean area during care of an individual patient.
- After removing gloves.
- After handling soiled equipment, materials or environment.
- Before preparing or handling food.
- After personal bodily functions such as blowing nose or using the lavatory.

Antiseptic Hand Hygiene

Use an antiseptic handwashing agent or alcohol hand rub product²³ (which should **only** be used on **visibly clean hands**).

Antiseptic hand hygiene should be used:

- Before and after each patient contact in critical care units, with those who are immunocompromised/with large wounds/burns and before entering units/wards with such patients).
- After all contact with patients on transmission-based precautions and prior to leaving wards/rooms with such patients.
- When hands are inadvertently contaminated with a heavy microbial load such as foul or infectious material. (Always wash hands when visibly contaminated.)
- Before performing invasive procedures as part of an aseptic technique.

23. An alcohol-based product should only be used on visibly clean hands and is recognised as a superior hand hygiene product for almost every situation. Alcohol hand rub products with added emollient reduce the risk of dermatological side effects. Repeated use of alcohol-based products with added emollients may result in an excessive build up of emollient on the hands, and this may be reduced by periodic washing with soap and water.