

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene compliance

To support compliance with hand hygiene in the workplace, health care workers should observe the following guidelines while working.



Nails

Keep nails short, clean and polish free. Do not wear artificial nails or nail extensions.



Jewellery

Avoid wearing wrist watches and jewellery.



Rings

Avoid wearing rings with ridges or stones (a plain wedding band is usually acceptable, but refer to local policies).



Cuts

Cover any cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing.



Sleeves

Wear short sleeves or roll up sleeves prior to hand hygiene (refer to local dress code or uniform policies).



Skin

Report any skin conditions affecting hands (for example, psoriasis or dermatitis) to your occupational health provider for advice.

Source: HSE. (2012). The Use of Gloves. Available: www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/blood-borne-viruses/use-of-gloves.htm#what-gloves-should-be-worn.

Hand hygiene and glove disposal

It is important to remember that glove use is not a replacement for effective hand washing. The two should work together to protect the wearer and others, such as a patient or client being treated. Key requirements are:

1. When using disposable gloves, your hands should be washed and dried thoroughly before putting the gloves on.
2. Where client or patient treatments are involved, a fresh pair of single use examination gloves must be worn for each procedure and must be disposed of between procedures to avoid cross-infection. Never wash and reuse disposable gloves.
3. If you need to stop work temporarily (e.g. to answer a phone), always remove and discard the gloves you are wearing and replace them when you continue working.
4. Always wash your hands after glove removal - gloves are not a replacement for hand washing.
5. Moisturising hand cream, applied after hand washing, can help prevent skin drying after frequent washing. Such products should never be relied upon as a physical barrier to protect the skin from infection.

Source: Royal College of Nursing (2012). Wipe it Out: Essential Practice for Infection Prevention and Control. RCN Guidance for Nursing Staff.