

# HAND HYGIENE: VITAL TO QUALITY CARE

Clean hands ensure clean and safe care. With clean hands, health workers can protect themselves and their patients from infection. Proper hand hygiene is a proven way to prevent infections. Appropriate hand hygiene infrastructure, practice, and leadership can support good hand hygiene.

**1.5 MILLION  
HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED  
INFECTIONS  
AT ANY GIVEN TIME**<sup>1</sup>

## IMPACT OF HAND HYGIENE

Poor hand hygiene leads to adverse health outcomes, including healthcare-associated infections and sepsis. These can affect patient quality of care, cause longer hospital stays, create disabilities, and increase the risk of antimicrobial resistance among patients.<sup>2</sup>

## KEY MOMENTS TO WASH

The World Health Organization recommends five critical moments in which all health workers and staff must wash or disinfect their hands: before patient contact, before an aseptic task, after body fluid exposure risk, after patient contact, and after contact with patient surroundings.<sup>3</sup>



**61%  
OF HEALTH WORKERS DO  
NOT COMPLY WITH  
PROPER HAND HYGIENE  
PRACTICES**<sup>2</sup>

## WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

A 2018 study found that 66% of health facilities in developing countries lack hand hygiene infrastructure. All healthcare leaders must prioritize strategies to improve hand hygiene during these critical moments, including prioritizing access to handwashing stations or handrub, and developing accountability mechanisms for staff.

## PRIORITIZING HAND HYGIENE

Healthcare leaders should ensure hand hygiene policies are in place, prioritize access to hand hygiene supplies, and promote training and accountability for all staff to ensure compliance. Improvements in policy, funding, and strategy will ensure hand hygiene is prioritized and recognized in healthcare facilities.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO



**Governments:** Invest in critical infrastructure for WASH in health facilities. Include hand hygiene in policies, requirements, and monitoring for quality care.



**Health facility leaders:** Ensure availability of hand hygiene supplies and infrastructure; and demonstrate a leadership commitment to hand hygiene.



**Businesses and donors:** Invest in behavior change, infrastructure, and supplies.



**Advocates:** Call for hand hygiene infrastructure, programming, and monitoring as an essential part of keeping health workers and patients safe.



**Health workers and patients:** Clean your hands at critical times.

### References

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**GLOBAL  
HANDWASHING  
PARTNERSHIP**