Recommendation to Member States to improve hand hygiene practices widely to help prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus by:

1. Providing universal access to public hand hygiene stations and making their use obligatory on entering and leaving any public or private commercial building and any public transport facility.

2. Improving access to hand hygiene facilities and practices in health care facilities.

INTERIM RECOMMENDATION 1 April 2020

Current evidence indicates that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted through respiratory droplets or contact. Contact transmission occurs when contaminated hands touch the mucosa of the mouth, nose, or eyes; the virus can also be transferred from one surface to another by contaminated hands, which facilitates indirect contact transmission. Consequently, hand hygiene is extremely important to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It also interrupts transmission of other viruses and bacteria causing common colds, flu and pneumonia, thus reducing the general burden of disease. Although awareness of the importance of hand hygiene in preventing infection with the COVID-19 virus is high, access to hand hygiene facilities that include alcohol-based hand rubs as well as soap and water is often suboptimal in the community and in health care facility settings, especially in low- and middle-income countries. WHO and UNICEF estimate that globally 3 billion people lack hand hygiene facilities at home and two out of five health care facilities lack hand hygiene at points of care.1 Further, access has become increasingly challenging as a result of stock-outs of supplies. When hand hygiene is provided free of charge and is made obligatory by public health authorities, acceptability and adherence to hand hygiene best practices are improved, including in public health emergencies of international concern.2,3 Hand hygiene is the most effective single measure to reduce the spread of infections through multimodal strategies, including access to the appropriate supplies.4 Therefore, this guidance is relevant for all countries and is recommended particularly for areas without ready access to hand hygiene locations.

WHO recommends the following:

1. One or several hand hygiene stations (either for handwashing with soap and water5 or for hand rubbing with an alcohol-based hand rub6) should be placed in front of the entrance of every public

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5 Where ABHR or bar soap is not feasible, a liquid soap solution, mixing detergent with water, can be used. The ratio of detergent to water will depend on types and strengths of locally available product.
6 Chlorine hand washing solutions are not recommended because of potential harm to users and those making the solutions, as well as degradation of chlorine exposed to sunlight or heat. Soap is generally cheap and easy to find, and liquid soap solutions can also be used.
Organ waste version)

Testing and Materials). 7 The WHO multimodal hand hygiene improvement strategy includes the following integrated elements: 1) system change ensuring availability of alcohol-based hand rub products, as well as soap, water, and disposable/clean towels; 2) training and education of all health workers on hand hygiene best practices and their importance; 3) evaluation and feedback of hand hygiene infrastructure, compliance, and other indicators; 4) reminders and communications to remind all health workers as well as patients and visitors about hand hygiene; and 5) an institutional safe hygiene infrastructure, compliance and reminders and communications about the importance of hand hygiene in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.


8 An effective alcohol-based hand rub product should contain between 60% and 80% of alcohol and its efficacy should be proven according to the European Norm 1500 or the standards of the ASTM International (formerly, the American Society for Testing and Materials).

9 https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand_Hygiene_Why_How_and_When_Brochure.pdf?ua=1.

10 https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Guide_to_Local_Production.pdf?ua=1.

11 https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand_Hygiene_Why_How_and_When_Brochure.pdf?ua=1.

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https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand_Hygiene_Why_How_and_When_Brochure.pdf?ua=1.
9. All health care facilities are strongly encouraged to participate actively in the WHO Save Lives: Clean Your Hands campaign before and on 5 May 2020\textsuperscript{12} and to respond to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Global Call to Action on WASH in health care facilities.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} \url{https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/campaigns/clean-hands/en/}.

\textsuperscript{13} \url{https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/facilities/healthcare/en/}; www.washinhcf.org.