



**STOP!**  
*clean your hands*



**ARRÊT!**  
*nettoyez-vous les mains*

# PATIENT & FAMILY HAND HYGIENE GUIDE

[www.handhygiene.ca](http://www.handhygiene.ca)

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Canadian  
Patient  
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canadien  
pour la sécurité  
des patients

safer healthcare  
**now!**

# INTRODUCTION

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This booklet is to offer patients and their loved ones information about how they can help stop the spread of healthcare associated infections through good hand hygiene.



# ADVOCATING FOR GOOD HAND HYGIENE

## A BEDSIDE PERSPECTIVE

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Johanna and her husband didn't realize the vital role that hand washing had on her mother-in-law's care. After watching as their mom's health deteriorated from a *Clostridium difficile* infection and the six courses of powerful antibiotics given, unsuccessfully, to combat it – Johanna has one strong message for care givers, patients and loved ones – **WASH YOUR HANDS.**

“My beloved mother-in-law was not quarantined at first after contracting *Clostridium difficile*. We were unaware of the importance of hand washing with this infection which spreads by dry spores that can last a long time on any surface and are not killed by alcohol gel.” says Johanna. “We could have been re-infecting her; she could have been re-infecting herself because she was unable to wash her hands properly on her own and staff could also have been re-infecting her.”

Their mom's caregivers often worked in more than one healthcare setting and *Clostridium difficile* could easily be carried from one facility to another. “There were so many opportunities to spread infection and several residents of our mom's care home had the same illness. If we had known more about how *C. diff* spreads we would have been much more vigilant. We could have helped protect her,” says Johanna.

Eventually their mom's health deteriorated and Hospice Services was called in to help make her last days more comfortable. She died at the age of 92 after showering her family with love, gratitude, praise and her own unique brand of wisdom. Johanna and her husband will never forget their mom's down-to-earth philosophy of life “religion is how you treat other people.” Johanna will also never stop advocating for good hand hygiene in healthcare and the impact it can have on a loved ones care.



## REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS!

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It has been found that less than 40 per cent of healthcare providers wash their hands. Reasons for not washing hands range from not enough time, to limited access to the proper tools, to just forgetting to do what's right. Optimal hand hygiene requires using the right method in the right way, at the right place, and at the right time.

**Each year in Canada, 8,000 to 12,000 patients die as a result of complications of healthcare associated infections.** Through the simple act of practicing optimal hand hygiene, you can help reduce that number by half! The spread of bacteria by human hands creates risk at home, in the community, and in healthcare settings. Without action, both patients, their families and healthcare workers are at risk.

**Whether you're a patient, a family member, or a visitor, your role in supporting hand hygiene is extremely important.** Your active participation in good hand hygiene practices is the first step. You also have an opportunity to advocate for the quality of your own healthcare or to support someone who may not be able to speak for themselves. Good healthcare starts with good communication.



The website, [www.handhygiene.ca](http://www.handhygiene.ca) is packed with tools, information, and resources to reduce healthcare associated infections. Help us help you to save lives! Let's all make it a habit to wash our hands!

# HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS

## WHAT ARE “SUPERBUGS”?

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A healthcare associated infection is an infection that a patient develops while in hospital, after being admitted for a reason other than the infection. Organisms causing infections are often referred to as “superbugs”, including Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), Vancomycin Resistant *Enterococci* (VRE), or *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff). These organisms are transferred from patient to patient in the course of their care.



# THE BOTTOM LINE

One of the most important things you can do is wash your hands. Germs that have the potential to make you sick are everywhere – at home, at work, on the bus and at the hospital.

HOME



WORK



PUBLIC



HOSPITAL



## TO HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTIONS

***Wash your hands often using soap and water or hand sanitizer.***

Many public places now have hand sanitizer dispensers for you to use. You can also get small bottles of hand sanitizer at your local drugstore or supermarket to carry around with you in your pocket or purse.

***When you visit the doctor, go to the hospital or any healthcare facility, it is very important to wash your hands.***

Wash your hands thoroughly before you visit the doctor or someone in the hospital, while you're there and when you are leaving. Having clean hands helps to protect you from getting an infection and keeps you from spreading germs from one location, or person, to another.

***If you are being seen by a healthcare professional ask them to wash their hands before examining you.***

Patients, family members and healthcare workers all have a role to play in reducing healthcare associated infections. In addition to ensuring you wash your hands frequently you may wish to ask your healthcare worker to do the same before providing care. Together we can make a difference and reduce infections by always practicing good hand hygiene.



## 4 MOMENTS IN HOSPITALS

These are the cues that healthcare workers use to remind them about when to clean their hands. These cues can be used by you while you're in the hospital.

**Moment 1:** Before initial patient or patient environment contact, the healthcare worker cleans her/his hands before coming into contact with you or your environment.

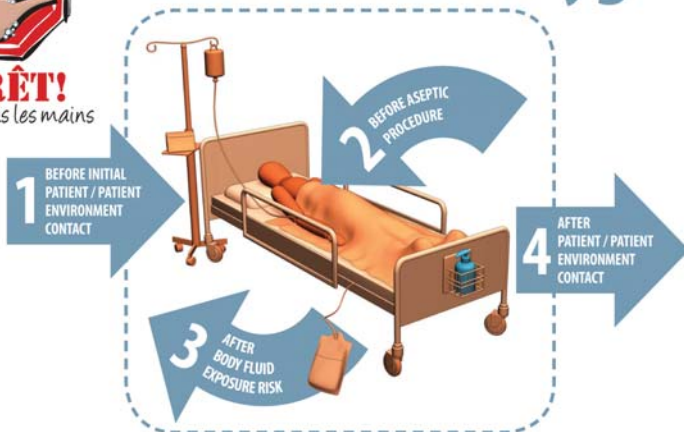
**Moment 2:** Before aseptic procedure, the healthcare worker cleans her/his hands before starting an IV, changing a dressing, or inserting a catheter

**Moment 3:** After patient / patient environment contact, the healthcare worker cleans her/his hands after she/he has finished providing care or visiting you in your room.

**Moment 4:** After body fluid exposure risk, the healthcare worker cleans her/his hands after emptying your catheter, after starting your IV, after changing your dressing or after performing any other procedure where there was exposure to any of your body fluids.



## Your 4 Moments for Hand Hygiene





## AT HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY

It's not enough to just practice good hand hygiene in healthcare settings. Serious infections can be picked up anywhere and without knowing it, you can become ill or spread that illness to someone else. Here are some tips to help you think about your own hand hygiene practices.

### AROUND THE HOME



### OUT IN THE COMMUNITY



## YOUR 4 MOMENTS

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**Moment 1:** **Before** you start your day: Wash your hands when you get up and **before** any contact with other members of your family or your environment.

**Moment 2:** **Before** you do any food preparation, or first aid in the home.

**Moment 3:** **After** going to the bathroom - every single time! After you do any food preparation, first aid, gardening, or other activities around the home such as housework, or taking out the trash, clean your hands!

**Moment 4:** **After** contact with other people and other environments such as grocery shopping, stopping at your child's school, visiting a loved one in the hospital, or going to the bank, clean your hands!

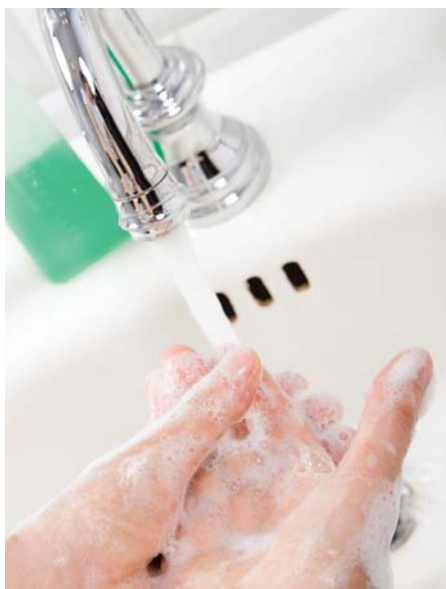


## KEEP TWO SIMPLE RULES IN MIND

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**Rule 1:** When your hands are visibly dirty or they feel dirty, clean them well with soap and water! Scrub your hands, back and front and between the fingers and dry them thoroughly! Even the act of thorough drying helps to get rid of bacteria and viruses on your hands.

**Rule 2:** In every other case, and if you can't get to a sink, use an alcohol based hand rub. Alcohol based hand rubs are known to get rid of a wide range of bacteria and viruses that can infect us and make us sick. Use a sufficient amount of alcohol rub and rub vigorously until your hands are completely dry.



## ASK. LISTEN. TALK. WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF INFECTIONS

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We all have a role to play in practicing optimal hand hygiene every day and in every setting. While the responsibility for performing proper hand hygiene in the healthcare environment rests with the healthcare worker, as a patient or family member **ASK. LISTEN. TALK.** to ensure hand hygiene is performed at the right time every time. Remember, good healthcare always starts with good communication.

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*clean your hands*



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