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HAND HYGIENE TIMES

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Understanding myths to overcome barriers to help improve hand hygiene compliance

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Every year on May 5th, the World Health Organization, healthcare facilities, and committed partners all over the globe come together to celebrate World Hand Hygiene Day, drawing attention to why effective hand hygiene is a vital lifesaving measure. World Hand Hygiene Day is also an opportunity to remind ourselves that while we have made great strides in quality and patient safety, there is still room for improvement.

There are still simple barriers we have yet to overcome. For example, one of the healthcare worker (HCW) self-identified barriers to hand hygiene compliance is skin damage resulting from repeated use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) and soap and water.¹ A contributing factor is a lack of awareness of the true causes of skin damage. Common and pervasive myths are still frequently encountered in clinical settings, and addressing these myths is a critical step towards improving hand hygiene compliance.

MYTH 1
Soap and water is gentler on my skin.

TRUTH 1

Over-use of soap and water causes damage to the stratum corneum, or outermost layer of the skin by dissolving the lipids that help retain the skin's moisture. As a result, water is lost, leading to dry, flakey skin. With each soap and water use, the problem worsens. Eventually, nerves in the skin become exposed, and when alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) is applied, there is stinging and burning which drives further soap and water use. Because of the stinging, HCW often continue to use soap and water. This can cause a vicious cycle of injury that is difficult to interrupt.

MYTH 2
Alcohol-based hand rub dries out my skin.

TRUTH 2

Well-formulated ABHRs have very little impact on the stratum corneum. ABHR can cause stinging and burning when hands are already damaged, usually from over-use of soap and water. Imagine applying ABHR to your hand when you have a paper-cut. The ABHR burns, but it did not cause the paper cut.

MYTH 3
Soap and water works better than ABHR.

TRUTH 3

The World Health Organization recommends using ABHR as the preferred means of cleaning hands. ABHR is very well-studied and has been shown to have superior efficacy over soap and water (even antimicrobial soap), and has many other benefits like speed, convenience, better compliance, and of course, skin health benefits.²

MYTH 4
After every 3-5 ABHR uses, I should wash my hands with soap and water.

TRUTH 4

This is not necessary. When ABHRs were first introduced to the market many years ago, manufacturers recommended washing after every 3-5 uses. Since then, formulations have evolved, and this is no longer recommended. If product build-up develops, it can be washed off, although it is best to reserve soap and water for when absolutely necessary, like when hands have visible blood or bodily fluids on them.

The Canadian Patient Safety Institute's (CPSI) national STOP! Clean Your Hands Day will coincide with this global initiative of the World Health Organization. More than 1500 sites across Canada participated in 2018 and now you can too! #STOPCleanyourhandsday



Learn more and register to participate.
<http://who.int/infection-prevention/en>



1. The Joint Commission. Measuring hand hygiene adherence: overcoming the challenges. 2009. Available from: http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/hh_monograph.pdf. Accessed February 7, 2019.
2. World Health Organization. WHO guidelines on hand hygiene in health care. First global patient safety challenge: clean care is safer care. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241597906_eng.pdf. Published 2009. Accessed February 7, 2019.

PRODUCT FEATURE

On-line Resources for Staff Hand Hygiene Education

To help Infection Preventionists implement, manage and drive hand hygiene compliance among healthcare workers (HCWs), GOJO has developed a variety of educational building tools. These new tools will support your efforts to increase awareness and address common knowledge barriers amongst staff on how, when and why to perform hand hygiene and help keep their skin healthy.



The 5 RIGHTS OF HAND HYGIENE™

Borrowing from the concept of the Five Rights of Medication Administration, we created the Five Rights of Hand Hygiene™ to assist healthcare workers with understanding the different critical aspects of hand hygiene.

In-Service Training

A variety of videos, symposiums and webinars help you promote best practices and can be used create a training program for your staff

Posters & Signs

Patient Hand Hygiene Educational Brochures

Patient Meal Tray Reminder Cards

Screen Savers, Posters and Buttons

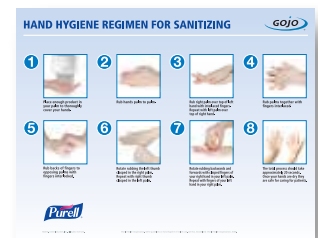
GOJO has a variety of complimentary hand hygiene awareness resources available for you to download. Use them in your facility to emphasize the importance of hand hygiene in reducing the spread of germs.

White Papers and Technical Documents

Access in-depth information on the latest improvements and innovations in infection control.

Online Newsletters

Your resource for the latest news in effective infection control program development and best practices.



To learn more about the GOJO educational resources, visit GOJOCanada.ca/education