



## Fact Sheet

### Hand Hygiene Guidelines Fact Sheet

**Frequent hand washing** is the **single best thing** people can do to avoid getting sick, from colds and the flu due to germs lurking on surfaces and in food.

- **Improved adherence to hand hygiene** (i.e. hand washing or use of alcohol-based hand rubs) **has been shown to terminate outbreaks in health care facilities**, to reduce transmission of antimicrobial resistant organisms (e.g. MRSA: methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus) and reduce overall infection rates.
- **Handwashing with soap and water** remains a sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-health care settings and is recommended by CDC and other experts.
- **The use of gloves does not eliminate the need for hand hygiene.** *Always wash your hands after removing gloves.* Likewise, the use of hand hygiene does not eliminate the need for gloves. Gloves reduce hand contamination by 70 percent to 80 percent, prevent cross-contamination and protect patients and health care personnel from infection.
- **Handrubs should be used before and after each client just as gloves should be changed before and after each client.** When using an alcohol-based handrub, apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until hands are dry. Note that the volume needed to reduce the number of bacteria on hands varies by product.
- Health care personnel should **avoid wearing artificial nails and keep natural nails less than one quarter of an inch long** if they care for patients at high risk of acquiring infections (e.g. Patients in intensive care units or in transplant units)

