



---

# Advice on handwashing for visitors to healthcare facilities

Handwashing is the single most important method of preventing and controlling infection.

When you visit any healthcare facility or care home, please follow the infection control advice given to you by the staff.

This will involve you washing your hands or applying alcohol handrub on entering or leaving the ward or care home.

## Hands should be cleaned:

- on entering and leaving a healthcare facility
- after visiting the toilet
- before assisting someone with their food/drink
- before handling, preparing or serving food/drink
- before eating food/drink
- when the hands are visibly soiled
- after coughing or sneezing into the hands

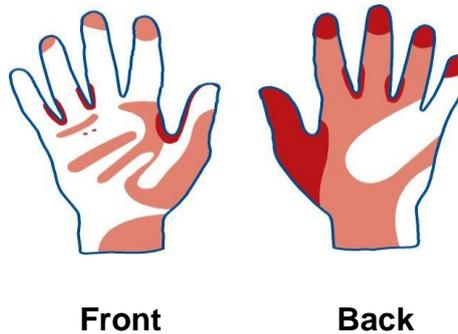
## How to wash your hands:

It is important that handwashing is carried out correctly to prevent the spread of infection.

Washing hands with liquid soap and warm running water will remove the majority of germs, preventing the spread of germs to other people.

Studies show that handwashing techniques are often poor and the most commonly neglected areas are the tips and in-between the fingers, palms of the hands, the wrists and the thumbs.

### Diagram 1: Areas Frequently Missed



### Equipment needed for effective handwashing:

- handwash basin
- warm running water
- liquid soap
- disposable paper towels
- foot operated pedal bin

### Use of alcohol handrub

In some cases access to handwash basins may not be easy and the use of an alcohol handrub is recommended. This is often the case when entering hospital wards.

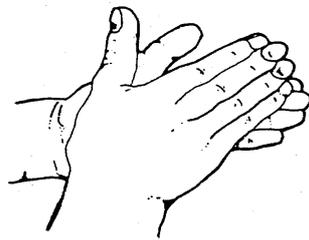
This preparation should be rubbed into all areas of the hands, again paying attention to the thumbs, fingertips, wrists, in-between the fingers and the backs of the hands (see diagram overleaf) until the hands feel dry. Sufficient handrub must be used to treat all areas of the hands.

**N.B.** Alcohol handrubs are not effective against some germs so follow the staff's advice.

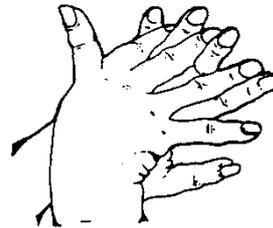
If you see that people are not cleaning their hands, politely ask them to do so.

## Diagram 2: Hand Washing Technique

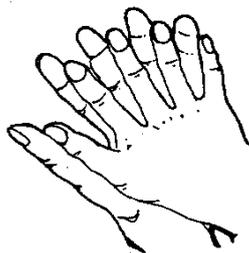
- wet hands and apply liquid soap
- rinse hands under warm running water
- dry hands thoroughly with paper towels



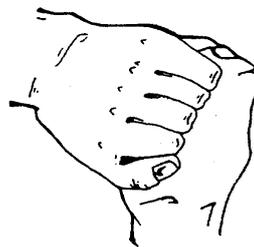
1. Palm to palm



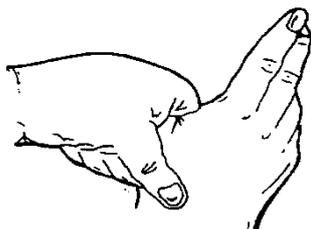
2. Right palm over left dorsum and left palm over right dorsum



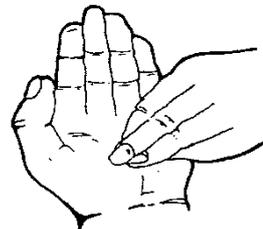
3. Palm to palm fingers interlaced



4. Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



5. Rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm and vice versa



6. Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa

## STOPPING THE SPREAD OF INFECTION IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

---

This factsheet has been reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team from the North West.

Further advice may be obtained from Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England Centre. Telephone 0844 225 0602