

## HAND HYGIENE

**This fact sheet has been written to provide information about hand hygiene. We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or nursing staff.**

### Help us to prevent infections spreading

The easiest way to pass on germs is with our hands so when staff clean their hands before and after touching each patient it helps stop the germs spreading.

### Why is hand hygiene so important?

Hand hygiene is the single most effective action that can be taken to prevent the spread of infection. It removes most germs picked up by the hands and also reduces the numbers that normally live on the skin.

### There are two main ways to clean hands:

#### Washing with soap and water

This removes germs and is best when hands are soiled. Soap and water should be used to clean hands if the patient is vomiting or has diarrhoea.

#### Using alcohol hand rub

These kill more than 99 per cent of germs in around 30 seconds and dry naturally on the skin. And because we don't have to be near a sink to use them, they are also very convenient. Here at Liverpool heart & Chest Hospital we encourage staff to use them.

We hope that seeing us wash our hands and use the alcohol hand rub use them will help you feel confident that you're in safe hands.

### What causes infection?

Infections are never caused by dirt – they can be caused by viruses, but mostly by 'bugs' or germs called bacteria that occur naturally all around us. They also live on our skin, and in our mouths and noses. Most of them do not do us any harm. But when we are unwell or frail, due to illness or after an operation, our bodies' natural defences are weaker, so more care is needed to protect us.

We take hand hygiene seriously but sometimes when we're really busy, we might not clean our hands as often as we should. So if you're worried that we've forgotten, it's OK to remind us! We welcome your help in keeping you safe.

Please inform a member of staff if supplies of soap, paper towels or alcohol hand rub are low and we will replenish them for you.

### For Further Information

Please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff in the first instance if you have any further questions, or contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 0151 600 1057 or 1326.