

# Personal Hygiene in the Health Care Sector

- The Road to Health and Well-being



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The focus on good personal hygiene is growing due to the increasing number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Inadequate personal hygiene may result in contagious diseases spreading, resulting in sick days, reduced ability to work, poor quality of life – or worst case premature death.

For the individual, good personal hygiene provides a feeling of cleanliness and well-being, whereas poor personal hygiene can lead to dry skin, sweaty and dirty skin, unpleasant smells and the risk of developing complications like for instance ulcers.

This document describes a holistic and structured approach to good personal hygiene for care givers and other people participating in personal hygiene tasks.

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**DISCLAIMER:** This whitepaper is for informational purposes only and serves as inspiration to select and apply solutions for personal hygiene. The know-how and practices presented in this paper are not exhaustive and can never substitute medical advice. Each user is responsible for independently evaluating his or her own particular use of the know-how and practices provided in this paper.

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## Did you know that...?

**Hospital infections affect 14 out of every 100 patients admitted.**



Simple and low-cost infection prevention and control measures, such as appropriate hand hygiene, can reduce the frequency of health care-associated infections by more than 50%.

Source: WHO

## Content Table:

### How to perform good personal hygiene?

1. Take a structured approach to personal hygiene from top to toe
  - 1.1 disposable wash-without-water products
  - 1.2 Wear protective clothing
2. How to perform a good body wash from top to toe
  - 2.1 Intimate hygiene
  - 2.2 Hair wash
  - 2.3 Mouth and teeth
  - 2.4 Take good care of nails and skin on hands and feet
  - 2.5 Special attention to shaving
3. Pay special attention to hand hygiene
4. How do deal with resistant bacteria
  - 4.1 Clostridium difficile
  - 4.2 MRSA
  - 4.3 Norovirus
5. Take responsibility

## How to perform good personal hygiene?

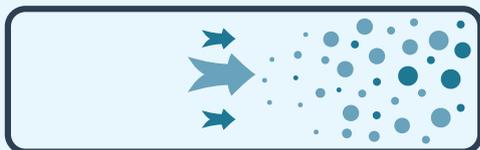
Good personal hygiene implies that the whole body, hands, feet, skin, hair and nails are cleaned and cared for. Good personal hygiene is based on the following three focus areas:

1. Take a structured approach to personal hygiene from top to toe
2. Pay special attention to hand hygiene
3. How do deal with resistant bacteria

This paper takes a closer look at each of the topics, helping individuals, care givers and other professionals understand the importance of personal hygiene and how to practice good hygiene in the daily care routines.

### Structured Approach in Hygiene:

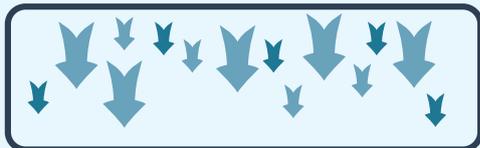
1. From clean to dirty skin



2. From inside to outside



3. From the top to the bottom



## 1. Take a structured approach to personal hygiene from top to toe

In order to avoid infections it is extremely important to take a structured approach from top to toe. This implies that you always have to perform the daily hygiene tasks:

- From clean to dirty skin
- From inside to outside
- From the top to the bottom

It is important to remember that the areas with most bacteria are the anus, groin, hands, feet, and armpits. The urethral opening and the eyes are the most sensitive areas to infections. Make sure that you do not move bacteria from other parts of the body to the urethral opening or the eyes.

### 1.1 Disposable wash-without-water products are preferred by patients and care givers

Use of disposables for body wash and intimate hygiene reduces the risk of infections, simply because you avoid moving bacteria from one place to another when you throw away the disposable cloths or gloves as you perform the personal hygiene routines.

The quality of bed baths using wash-without-water products is ranked very high among patients and nurses. In fact, a study from 2014 has shown that 61% of patients and nurses would permanently trade water and soap bed baths for washing without water.

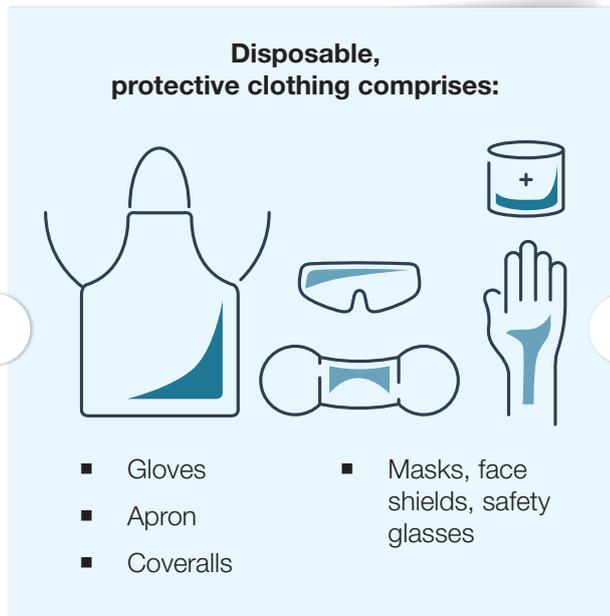
The use of disposables is easy and less time consuming, leaving more time for other care tasks. Also, it eliminates the use of water and water bowl, which are known to increase the risk of infections and development of skin irritation.



Wash-without-Water solutions

## 1.2 Wear protective clothing to avoid contagion

It is strongly recommended that care givers performing personal hygiene tasks wear protective clothing and gloves to avoid spreading infectious diseases. Protective clothing and gloves protect the care giver from contamination of clothing, hands or other body parts. It also prevents bacteria spreading from one patient to another.



### Gloves are your best friend for all tasks

Gloves must always be used by care givers when performing tasks related to personal hygiene or handling of excretions. Gloves are used for both clean and unclean tasks to protect care giver and patient from contagion. Remember to:

- Put on the gloves just before you start the task
- Change the gloves when you go from an unclean task to a clean task
- Throw away the gloves right after use
- Wash and or disinfect your hands immediately after completion of the task

Gloves must be CE-marked and fulfil requirements of DS/EN 455-1,2,3

### Use aprons or coveralls for special unclean tasks

Aprons or coveralls protect your clothes when handling excretions, doing intimate care routines, cleaning tasks or handling dirty textiles. Remember to:

- Avoid the contaminated side of the apron/coverall touching your clothes
- Throw away your apron/coverall right after use
- Wash your hands or disinfect your hands immediately after completing the task

### Use masks, face shields, safety glasses

In case of risk of splashes, sprays, and spatter of body fluids it is advised protect the face with a mask, face shield or safety glasses.

Masks must fulfil the requirements of DS/EN 14683:2014; shields/glasses must be CE-marked.

### Use protective covers to avoid contamination of the bedding

Protective covers can be used when bed baths or intimate care has to be performed in the bed. The covers prevent that bacteria spread to bedding, bed, mattress, pillow, quilts, etc. Remember to throw away the disposable cover after use.

### Handle waste with care

Waste such as diapers, wash cloths, disposables, etc., where excretions have been absorbed can be treated as part of the normal waste system. However, it is very important that this kind of waste is treated and disposed of in a responsible way to prevent other people handling the waste getting infected. This means that you should:

- Handle, wrap and dispose of the waste where you perform the task
- Use one waste bag per task
- Do not move one bag to another – this may increase the risk of spreading bacteria
- Use pedal bins to avoid bacteria on hands



## 2. How to perform a good body wash from top to toe

A full body wash should be performed daily, in the bathroom, in the shower or in the bed. It is important that you perform the body wash from clean to unclean areas, using this sequence:

- Eyes, face, ears, neck
- Arms, armpits, breast, stomach
- Legs and feet –
- Intimate areas, first in front, then at the back. In the case of faeces on the skin, start from the back

If you use wash-without-water products you don't have to rinse off with water, or use , bowls and towels. It may, however, be necessary to dry skin folds.

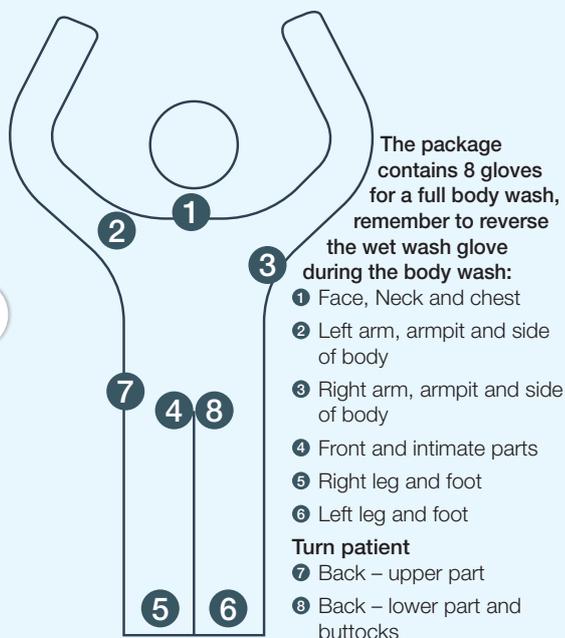
**NOTE:** Remember to take a new cloth or reverse the wet wash glove during the body wash.

If you wash with water and soap, you may have to change the water during the process to ensure the right soap/ water balance and that the water is not dirty.

### Make bed bathing a pleasant experience without water

If the patient needs a hair wash:

- Start or end with the hair wash
- Pre-heat Shampoo Cap
- Put hair in Shampoo Cap
- Massage for 2 minutes
- Take off and brush hair



#### Remember!



Dispose each glove after use



Use protective gloves when needed

Read more at [www.wash-without-water.com](http://www.wash-without-water.com)

## 2.1 Intimate hygiene requires special attention

Normally, intimate hygiene should be performed once a day. In case of urine/faeces incontinence and/or diaper changes, the intimate parts should always be rinsed.

Use of wash-without-water tissues or gloves is by far the gentlest way of cleaning, since the products supply care substances to the skin while at the same time cleaning the skin efficiently and removing dirt and smell.

Wash cream also provides a gently cleansing of the skin and does not require rinsing with water. Use high-quality disposable and soft cloths to minimize the risk of damaging the sensitive skin and mucous in the area. It may be necessary to dry skin folds.

If you want to use soap, you should use products for intimate care with a pH of 4-6 to protect the sensitive skin and mucous. Use high-quality and soft disposable cloths to protect the skin. Always rinse off the soap with clean water and dry the skin to avoid dampness that may cause skin irritation.

### Intimate hygiene – especially for women

- If using disposables: Start by cleansing the urethral opening and then the vagina opening. Then take a new cloth (or reverse the glove) and cleanse the labia majora, pubic hair, groin and then the perineum. Throw away the cloth.
- If using soap and water: Use the same procedure as for disposables and then rise of the soap by using a moist cloth without soap using the same procedure as above. When you are done rinsing, dry the skin with a towel using the same sequence.
- Take care that skin folds are dry no matter what procedure you are using.



### Intimate hygiene – especially for men

- Start with the penis. Wash the glans without soap, since the mucous is highly sensitive. Wash-without-water gloves or cloths can be used. Pull the foreskin down to allow cleansing around the urethral opening and then wash downwards making sure that all impurities are removed. Remember to pull the foreskin back.
- Take a new cloth or reverse the glove and wash the remaining part of the penis, pubic hair, scrotum and groin using the procedure described above using either disposables or soap/water.
- Make sure that the skin is dry in all places (except under the foreskin) and pay special attention to skin folds.





### Intimate hygiene – for men and women

Now it is time to wash the backside, and the same procedure can be used for men and women:

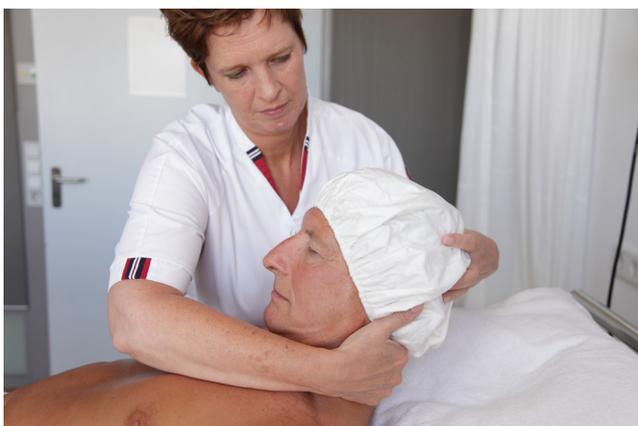
- First, wash the buttocks, then between the buttocks and lastly around anus.
- If needed, take a fresh cloth and repeat the procedure or reverse the glove and repeat the procedure.

If you have used soap, rinse of with clean water using the same sequence from buttocks to anus. Make sure to dry the skin, especially skin folds.



### 2.2 Hair wash is important for comfort and well-being

Hair wash is carried out according to need or patient wish. Remember that nice and clean hair is an important factor in comfort and well-being. If the patient cannot get into the shower, it is a good idea to use a shampoo cap. In case you perform a hair wash in bed, you need to cover the bedding with a liquid proof sheet to avoid that liquid – and thereby possibly bacteria – are transferred to the bedding, pillow, quilt, mattress, etc.



### 2.3 Mouth and teeth deserve careful attention

There are several reasons for paying special attention to mouth and teeth. First of all, it stimulates the production of saliva, and secondly, it maintains healthy mucous in the mouth and throat. It also prevents infections in mouth, teeth and respiratory tracts. And finally, good mouth hygiene supports good health and quality of life.

Pay special attention to care of mouth and teeth in cases where:

- People eat and drink less than average
- People are tube-fed, since their production of saliva is not stimulated by eating and drinking
- People receive oxygen treatment, since oxygen dries out the mucous
- People use sprays or vaporizers as treatment for respiratory diseases
- People are treated with radiation therapy or other cancer therapy damaging mucous and causing dry mouth syndrome
- People have weak muscles in mouth and/or jaw
- People are terminal ill
- People have infections of the mouth

If you are performing tasks related to mouth and teeth hygiene to others, you have to wear gloves to avoid spreading of bacteria.

#### When brushing teeth:

- Brush teeth twice a day using a soft brush with small head
- Before brushing of teeth, remove dentures
- Check mouth, teeth, gums, mucous and tongue for remains of food, sores, rashes, bleeding, bad smell, dry lips, etc.
- Brush teeth thoroughly and use dental floss if necessary
- Rinse mouth, gums and tongue if any coating occurs by using mouth care sticks, sprinkling water, or a special mouth rinse liquid. Liquids should only be used when the patient is awake.
- Use lip balm
- Reinsert dentures, when you have completed the other tasks





## 2.4 Take good care of nails and skin on hands and feet

Good care of nails on fingers and feet ensures a healthy skin and removes bacteria from under the nails. Besides, it is very important that the skin on hands on feet is clean and healthy to avoid dry, chapped skin and development of ulcers. Ingrowing nails may result in ulcers that can be difficult to heal. If you care for people with reduced blood circulation in the feet, it is of particular importance to pay special attention to skin care on the feet in order to reduce the risk of ulcers.

### Don't forget!

- Check hands and feet for ulcers, chapped skin, rashes, pain and impurities under and around the nails and check if the cuticles require extra care
- Never cut toe nails closely on the edges; if you do, it may cause ingrowing nails and ulcers
- Use scissors of high quality
- Remove impurities with care to avoid the utensils damaging the skins
- Dry, rough or chapped skin requires regular skin care – use a cream high in fat every day
- Use of soap can dry out the skin. When washing/bathing feet and hands, add oil to luke warm water and only soak for a short time. Dry carefully and always use cream.
- Take special care of the cuticles that protect the mails from bacteria, which may cause inflammation or damage the nails. If the cuticles are rough, chapped or fractured, they should be treated every day with a cream high in fat.
- Always consult a doctor or podiatrist if you encounter ulcers, pains or rashes. Ulcers on the feet always require specialist treatment.

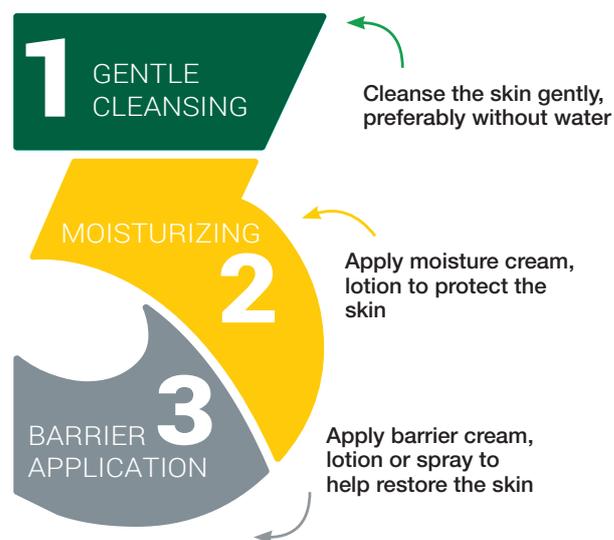
You should take care of the nails as part of the daily hygiene regime. Use cream to care and protect the skin on feet, hands and around the nails. Use an extra fat cream during night, if hands and feet require intensive care.

Care givers should wear disposable gloves during care tasks, and you should use a waterproof cover to prevent bacteria from spreading.

### When choosing products for skin cleansing and care:

- Choose right products, e.g. special products for intimate parts
- Choose eco-labelled products or dermatologic tested products.
- Choose products without perfume

After cleansing, apply skin moistening products – lotion, cream or oil. In case of rashes or irritation, apply barrier cream, lotion or spray to help restore the skin



## 2.5 Special attention to shaving

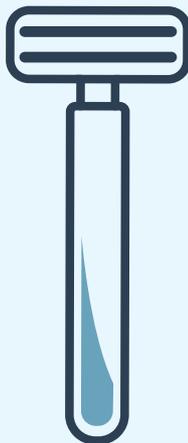
Shaving may cause skin irritation, if it is not done in the right way. Before starting the shave, it is important that the skin is clean and free of bacteria. Shaving leaves a small hole in the skin, where bacteria may penetrate the natural skin barrier when hair is removed. This can cause spots, irritation or pseudofolliculitis barbae also known as barber's itch.

Shaving is performed according to need using either an electric razor or manual razor blades. After shower or bath is a good time for shaving, since the skin is softened and makes gentle shaving easier. In general, care of face and neck using moisture cream needs to be done every day.

Care givers must use disposable gloves during shaving, and if the shaving is performed in bed, protective covers should be used.

### If you are using a razor blade, you should observe the following procedure:

- Apply a thin layer of shaving foam; take care not to use too much, since it may block the razor blade and reduce the efficiency of the razor.
- Start by the whiskers and continue to chin and neck before you shave cheeks and around the lips.
- Rinse the blade in between to ensure sharpness and efficiency.
- Use a sharp and clean blade.
- Rinse the face with cold water and dry gently after the shave.
- After shaving, the skin is more sensitive and you should avoid using aftershave or other products containing alcohol or perfume. Instead, use a good cream to care for and protect face and neck to prevent rashes or infections from occurring.



## 3 . Good hand hygiene is pivotal

Good hand hygiene has been proven to be the best way of preventing the spreading of infectious diseases. You must always wash and/or disinfect your hands:

- Before all clean tasks, e.g. before contact with mucous membranes, ulcers, catheters, clean instruments and food/beverages
- After all unclean tasks, e.g. after change of diaper, going to the toilet, blowing your nose, coughing or contact with contaminated surfaces or materials.
- Before and After the use of gloves

Insufficient hand hygiene is one of the most common causes of infectious diseases. Good hand hygiene is the most important precaution to prevent bacteria from spreading. If you encounter the flu, colds, coughing, running noses or diarrhea in your surroundings, you have to be extra careful with the hand hygiene.

Whether you are a caretaker, a patient, a relative or visitor in the care sector, always observe the basic rules for good hand hygiene:

- Wash/disinfect your hands when you arrive from the outside
- Wash/disinfect your hands before participating in meals
- Wash/disinfect your hands when you have been to the toilet

Hand disinfection is the first choice. Hand disinfection is performed when the hands are visibly clean and dry. Hand wash is performed if the hands are visibly soiled or wet. After wash, disinfect the hands.

**NOTE:** Always ask for advice if you have any questions about hand hygiene or if you need instructions.

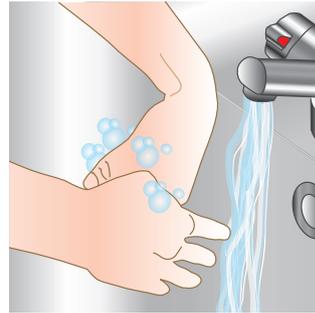
## Hand washing - when the hands are visibly dirty or after using gloves



1. Wet your hands with clean, running water.



2. Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces and wrist. Rub hands and wrist at least for 15 seconds.



3. Rub rotationally both thumbs.



4. Wash the surface of the nails with the hands closed.



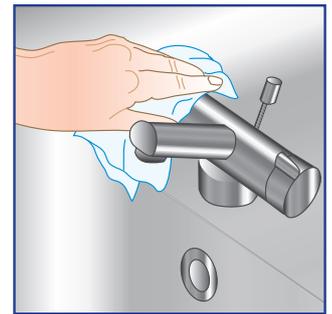
5. Wash in between the fingers with the right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa.



6. ...and from the palms.

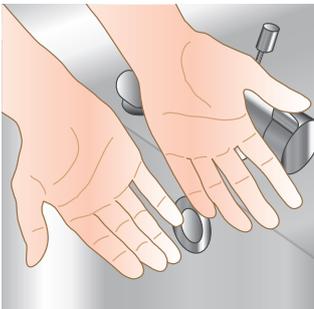


7. Rinse hands with water. Dry thoroughly with a single use towel.



8. Use the same towel to turn off the faucet.

## Hand disinfection shall take place when the hands are visibly clean and dry



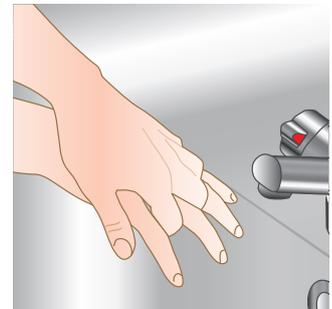
1. Use enough disinfectant so that your hands keep wet at least for 30 seconds.



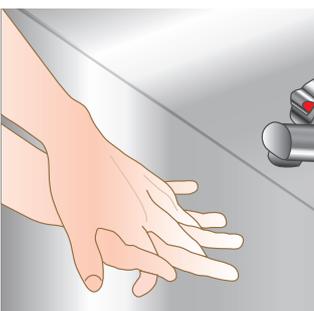
2. First rub the palms against each other.



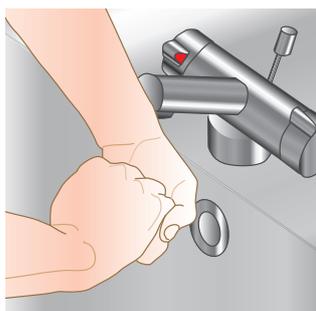
3. Rub the nails against each other.



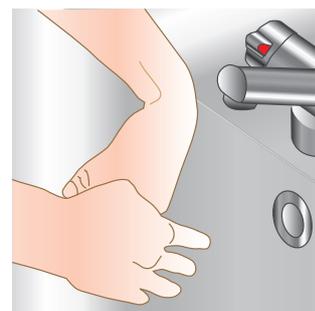
4. Disinfect the fingers with the right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa.



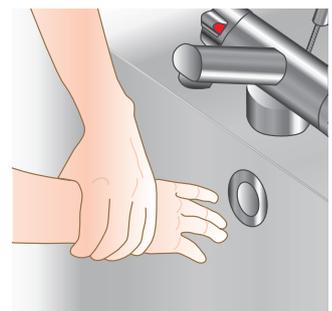
5. ... and from the palms.



6. Disinfect the surface of the nails with the hands closed.



7. Rub rotationally both thumbs.



8. Finalize by disinfecting both wrists. Rub the hands and wrists until dry.

## 4. How to deal with resistant bacteria

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria sicken millions of people around the world every year and account for an increasing number of serious infections and deaths. The problem of resistant bacteria is that commonly used antibiotics no longer can be used to treat common infections. Some examples of hazardous bacteria are:

- Clostridium difficile
- MRSA
- Norovirus

Everybody can contribute to curbing the transmission of these dangerous bacteria and virus. In the following section we will take a closer look at what you can do.

### 4.1 Clostridium Difficile

Clostridium Difficile (CD) is an anaerobic bacterium that can cause severe diarrhea, especially in older people and people suffering from serious illnesses. Ultimately, infections with CD can be fatal. CD is difficult to combat, and diarrhea caused by CD is often closely related to treatment with antibiotics.

The symptoms are bloody diarrhea, change of faeces colour, fever, stomach cramps, nausea and vomiting.

#### Contagion by CD

CD bacteria is present in faeces and is transferred via direct and indirect contact, by hand, equipment, handles, keyboards, often in connection with visits to the toilet. The primary source of infection is contact with other people, but the CD bacteria can survive for months, e.g. in bedding, furniture, floors, and household appliances.

#### What to do to avoid infections with CD

Patients can still be contagious even though they show no sign of sickness. Transmission of bacteria via hands is by far the most common source of infection, which is why good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent contagion. Hand wash and disinfection are required to avoid contagion, since CD is not fully receptive to alcohol.

### 4.2 MRSA

MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus) is of the staphylococcus family and resistant to the types of antibiotics normally used to treat infections with staphylococcus.

MRSA has rapidly spread across the world, thereby increasing the risk of being MRSA positive. 15 years ago, new types of MRSA were found in livestock, pigs, chickens, turkeys and calves.

In healthy people, the symptoms of MRSA infections are ulcers and cuts, impetigo, boils and cuticle infections. In older and weak people, the symptoms are the same with the added risk of inflammations, UTI, RTI or worst case inflammations of bones or septicemia.

#### Contagion by MRSA

MRSA is transmitted by direct or indirect contact, e.g. by hand, equipment, handles, keyboards and other items touched by hand. The primary source of infection is through contact with people, but the MRSA bacteria can survive for months in bedding, furniture, floor and other things.

#### What to do to avoid infections

Healthy and sick people may carry MRSA. The best way to prevent contagion is frequent hand wash and disinfection.

### 4.3 Norovirus

The highly contagious norovirus, also known as the vomiting bug, can tear through hospitals, institutions and classrooms, leaving vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps in its wake. Norovirus is sturdy, can survive for long in the environment and is resistant to some means of disinfection. The disease caused by Norovirus is highly contagious, difficult to deal with, but fortunately only rarely serious lasting only a few days.

Symptoms comprise nausea, acute and violent vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pains and cramps. Slight fever, headache and muscle pain can also accompany the virus. The incubation time is from 24 to 48 hours, and the sickness lasts from 24 to 60 hours.

Although the disease is not serious in itself, the dehydration that follows can be dangerous for older and weak people. In some cases, people have to be hospitalized, and in a few cases Norovirus has been documented to be fatal.

Even when the patient no longer feels sick and the symptoms have gone, the patient may still carry the virus up to 48 hours.

#### Contagion by Norovirus

Norovirus is transmitted through direct or indirect contact with faeces or vomit from an infected person. 30-80 % of people that come into contact with Norovirus become ill. Indirect contact is the typical source of infection, e.g. inadequate hand hygiene, contamination of food, kitchen equipment, door handles, taps, beds, etc.

#### What to do to avoid infections

Norovirus is highly contagious and correct hand hygiene is the best way to prevent contagion. Hand wash and disinfection is required to avoid contagion, since CD is not fully receptive to alcohol.

## 5. Take responsibility

We all have a role to play in fighting bacteria that can spread infectious diseases. You cannot leave it to doctors, nurses and other care givers. Everybody has to do his and her part by knowing and practicing good personal hygiene – every day.

We cannot avoid bacteria and infections. They will always be present in our surroundings, but we can do a lot to curb the spreading of infectious bacteria.

It does not require a whole lot of effort to follow the guidelines for good personal hygiene. Basically, it is a question of basic everyday habits. And although bacteria and infections are more or less invisible until the damage has been done, everybody can make a big difference by simply washing the hands or by handling waste with care. For everybody, it is rewarding to know that by practicing good personal hygiene you may help improve health and well-being for the people around you.

### **Achieve optimum hygiene conditions through specialist advice.**

Leading supplier of incontinence and healthcare products, Abena, offers specialist advice when purchasing the wide range of solutions needed to ensure a hygienic setup, both for your staff and patients. Abena's assortment of products ranges from; wash-without-water gloves and wipes to soaps, creams, lotions and sprays for cleansing, moisturizing and restoring skin to high-quality, breathable diapers and bed protection sheets.

### Sources:

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