

## Policies and Procedures

---

Policies and procedures: Believe it or not healthcare organizations have to have policies and procedures even on how their personnel should wash their hands.

Organization: Policies and procedures follow a strict organizational sequence: purpose, definitions, policies, procedures.

Format: To permit ease of reading and reference, an outline format is used, with decimal numbering. Notice the indentation. Subsections align to the text of the preceding, higher-level section. For example, section 3.2.A aligns to "Personnel" of section 3.2.

Definitions: Although it's hard not to laugh at the beginning of the definition of handwashing, the reference to an antimicrobial agent is significant? you can't just use hand soap!

Policies: A "policy" is a statement of a goal, a reference to a law or regulation, or in this case an explanation of conditions in which these procedures must be followed.

Procedures: Here begin the step-by-step instructions, which use imperative phrasing. The procedures show you how to carry out the policy.

### HANDWASHING FOR HOME HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL

#### 1.0 PURPOSES

The purposes of this policy are to:

- 1.1 Promote the prevention and control of infection.
- 1.2 Establish guidelines for handwashing in the home environment.

#### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Handwashing is the rubbing together of the surfaces of the hands with soap or antimicrobial agent followed by rinsing the hands in clean water.

#### 3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 All patient care personnel will wash their hands using the technique outlined in this handwashing procedure.
- 3.2 Personnel will wash their hands:
  - 3.2.A After entering the patient's home, before rendering care
  - 3.2.B Before performing an invasive or sterile procedure
  - 3.2.C Before contact with an immunocompromised patient
  - 3.2.D After any care or treatment that involves touching organic materials or open wounds
  - 3.2.E After handling contaminated materials, dressings, or equipment
  - 3.2.F After completing patient care
- 3.3 If gloves are worn, handwashing must follow the removal of gloves.

#### 4.0 PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Remove liquid soap and paper towels from black bag and place beside a sink that has warm, running water.
- 4.2 Roll up sleeves and remove jewelry.
- 4.3 Inspect hands and fingers for cuts or breaks in the skin. Report lesions to your supervisor.
- 4.4 Stand close to the sink, but refrain from leaning against the sink or touching the sink surface during washing.
- 4.5 Turn on the water using a paper towel to cover the faucets as you adjust the water flow and temperature. Water should be warm.

*Telegraphic writing style: Notice that in the policy and procedure sections, "understood" words are often omitted. Instead of "Discard the paper towel," it's "Discard paper towel." In this setting, telegraphic style is expected; otherwise, avoid it whenever you can.*

*Specifics: Considering the detail here and what's at stake, maybe policies and procedures on handwashing are not so absurd after all?*

*Other material: If you look at policy and procedure manuals in organizations, you'll see more material on the pages than you see here: for example, the name of the organization, headers or footers identifying the policy/procedure, and dates and approval stamps indicating the expiration or validity of this policy/procedure.*

- 4.6 Discard paper towel.
- 4.7 Wet hands thoroughly, keeping your hands lower than your elbows.
- 4.8 Apply liquid soap to hands, and rub hands vigorously until a lather is formed.
- 4.9 Wash hands for at least 15 seconds using circular motions.
- 4.10 Rinse hands thoroughly, keeping them down so that the water runs from the wrists to the fingertips.
- 4.11 Dry hands thoroughly using clean paper towels. Start with the fingers and move up to the wrists.
- 4.12 Use a dry, clean paper towel to turn off the faucet(s).
- 4.13 Discard paper towels in a proper receptacle.
- 4.14 After final use, return handwashing supplies to your black bag.
- 4.15 If you are in a home where there is no running water or where sanitary conditions are such that proper handwashing is impossible, scrub hands thoroughly using disposable antiseptic towelettes. Wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.