

HOW HAND HYGIENE ENSURES GOOD HEALTH

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HAND HYGIENE
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What is hand hygiene?

While the importance of hand hygiene is evident, few are clear about it. Hand hygiene actually refers to any action taken to clean and protect hands from harmful germs and contaminants, with the goal of preventing the spread of illness and infection. This includes handwashing with soap and water, using alcohol-based hand rubs (sanitizers), and surgical hand antisepsis.

The benefits of hand hygiene

So how does hand hygiene help safeguard health? If we look at it, hand hygiene is one of the simplest and most effective practices to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and maintain good health. The simple act of washing hands is underestimated by many people and not given its due importance. They tend to neglect washing their hands properly or frequently enough. Yet, this basic act can significantly reduce the transmission of bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens that cause illness.

Why hands?

Hands assume greater significance as they are a primary vehicle for transmitting germs. Every day, people touch countless surfaces – door handles, phones, money, public transport – all of which can harbour harmful microbes. When people touch their faces, food, or personal items with their hands, they transmit these pathogens into their bodies or spread them to others. The benefits of proper hand hygiene have actually been quantified with the World Health Organization (WHO) stating that proper hand hygiene can reduce the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases by up to 40% and respiratory infections by nearly 25%.

Hand hygiene in healthcare

In the healthcare sector, the importance of handwashing becomes even more critical. This is because patients already have weakened immune systems and are extremely susceptible to infection. So, in such environments, hand hygiene among



medical staff is crucial for preventing healthcare-associated infections, which at its extreme can lead to serious complications or even death.

The proper way to maintain hand hygiene

To be effective hand hygiene involves more than just a quick rinse. It is recommended to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, ensuring all areas – including between the fingers and under the nails – are cleaned. In the absence of soap and water, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol is an effective alternative.

Promoting hand hygiene is not only a personal responsibility but also a public health priority. Schools, workplaces and communities benefit when individuals practice proper hand hygiene, as it helps reduce absenteeism and lowers healthcare costs.

To sum up, hand hygiene is a simple yet powerful tool that requires minimal effort but offers substantial benefits in reducing the spread of disease. By making hand hygiene a regular habit, we can take a proactive step toward healthier lives and stronger communities.