

# Hand Hygiene Saves Lives!

One in every nine hospital patients in Canada contracts a healthcare-associated infection (HAI), resulting in an estimated 8,000 deaths annually. At least 30 per cent of HAIs can be prevented by following infection prevention and control strategies. Now imagine being able to help those patients with something so simple as... better hand hygiene.

- **Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR)** are the preferred method of hand hygiene in healthcare unless hands are visibly soiled. **If hands are visibly soiled**, wash hands with warm running water, soap, and friction.
- When dealing with spore-forming bacteria (e.g. *Clostridium difficile*), soap and water are preferred as ABHRs have limited effectiveness in killing spores.

**If isolation precautions are in place, always adhere to the hand hygiene directions appropriate to those precautions.**

**Gloves are not a substitute for performing hand hygiene, as all gloves have micropores, and germs can get through.** Hand hygiene must be performed before and after using gloves.

## **Remember:**

- Nails must be kept clean and short at all times. Long and/or chipped nails are known to harbor bacteria and interfere with effective hand hygiene.
- Hand and wrist jewellery should not be worn by healthcare providers, as jewellery hinders effective hand hygiene and harbors the growth of bacteria.
- Artificial nails and nail enhancements should also not be worn, as they have been associated with increased transmission of organisms and glove tears.

For more details and guidelines on hand hygiene information, please refer to your site-specific infection control manual.

