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Standard Operating Procedure Waterless (Alcohol) Hand Rub Technique

The Centers for Disease Control has strongly recommended, on the basis of scientific research, that hand hygiene practices in healthcare be improved. The main suggestion for improving compliance with optimal hand hygiene practices is the integration of alcohol hand sanitizers into handwashing protocol. Follow these simple steps to comply with accepted professional asepsis standards as specified in the 2003 CDC Hand Hygiene Recommendations and 2004 CDC Dental Infection Control Recommendations.

When to wash hands: Wash hands when visibly soiled or to remove potentially infectious materials.

When to use waterless hand rubs:

- Use alcohol sanitizers to kill or inactivate organisms on skin.
- Do NOT use waterless sanitizers instead of soap and water to wash away, remove, or clean substances and physical matter from skin (unless no water is available).
- Use waterless hand sanitizers when hands are not visibly soiled and bare hands have not contacted potentially infectious materials such as blood, saliva or respiratory secretions.

1.

Read and Follow manufacturer s directions for how much product to use, and how long product should remain on hands to achieve desired antiseptic effect.

2.

Apply recommended amount of product to dry hands.

- **Apply gels** to palm of one hand, then rub hands together to spread gel over all hand surfaces.
- **Apply sprays** to palms and fingernails with fingers bent to palm, then spread solution to all hand surfaces by rubbing hands together.
- Make sure to spread hand rub to fingernail area, between fingers, on thumbs, backs of hands and wrists, and any rough, thickened or creased skin areas where organisms may be hiding.

3.

Continue to **rub hands together**, covering all surfaces until hands are dry. Correct amount of solution should dry after 15 seconds.

4.

Don powderless gloves to minimize powder build-up on hands. Powder may require washing with soap and water to remove prior to application of waterless hand sanitizer. Use hand rub with latex compatible emollients to facilitate easy donning of gloves and protect skin. Practice aseptic technique for donning and removing gloves to prevent touching contaminated parts of gloves with bare hands. Select gloves that fit snugly but without pressure, and are easy to don and remove.

Cautions:

- Alcohol hand rubs should not be used on dirty hands, and cannot replace handwashing. They should be used along with handwashing as part of hand hygiene protocol.
- Long, false, polished and irregular fingernails and cuticles can interfere with effective hand hygiene and damage or compromise glove integrity. Keep nails smooth and short and avoid nail decoration or applications.
- Place alcohol hand rub dispensers away from sinks to avoid confusion with soap or lotion dispensers.
- Alcohol hand sanitizers are flammable. Take appropriate precautions when storing and using them.
- Dry sanitizer completely before gloving, as solutions may affect glove integrity.

This SOP demonstrates the few simple steps needed to use alcohol waterless hand rubs correctly. Posting and training with these steps will help offices be consistent in their hand hygiene practices. For further details and references, see the following references.

- (1) *CDC. Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings. MMWR 2003; 52(RR-17):14-16.*
- (2) *Carr, Michele. Waterless Hand Washing: A New Era in Hand Hygiene. Journal of Practical Hygiene march/April 2004: 33-36*
- (3) *Hughes, J., Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings, MMWR, Oct. 25, 2002 / Vol. 51 / No. RR-16*
- (4) *Hamann, C Infection Control for Clinical Practice: Hand Care and Protection, Journal of Practical Hygiene.*
- (5) *OSAP, From Policy to Practice: OSAP s Guide to the Guidelines, 2004, pg. 21-27*
- (6) *Andrews N., Infection Control in the Dental Practice, Journal of Practical Hygiene Supplement, 2004, Vol. 3, 1-4*