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Introducing Public Health Ontario's Modernized Hand Hygiene Program: Evidence-Informed Strategies for Improvement

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Define the continuing need for hand hygiene improvement.
- Describe the new PHO hand hygiene program, including the incorporated improvement strategies.
- Identify how the new hand hygiene program can be implemented/utilized within their specific setting.
- Discuss how the new program can be used to address persistent hand hygiene challenges.

Background

- Ontario's Just Clean Your Hands (JCYH) program was launched in 2008 and helped shape hand hygiene improvement efforts across the province
- JCYH emphasized
  - The four moments of hand hygiene
  - The importance of proper technique
  - Placement of alcohol-based hand rub at point-of-care
  - A multifaceted approach

The updated hand hygiene program continues to build on these best practices and a multifaceted approach, with a strong focus on the implementation of hand hygiene improvement strategies

Why Are We Still Talking About Hand Hygiene?

Hand hygiene is an effective strategy to prevent health care-associated infections (HAIs) by limiting the transmission of microorganisms, including antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs)



Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Best practices for hand hygiene in all health care settings. 4th ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2014. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2014/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf

What's the Big Deal with Heath Care Associated Infections and Antibiotic-Resistant Organisms?

Health Care Associated infections (HAIs) are infections acquired during the delivery of health care

They are associated with significant burden in terms of poor health, length of stay in hospital, health care costs, and mortality

Antibiotic resistance happens when organisms evolve over time and become resistant to antibiotics used to treat them

As more antibiotics lose their effectiveness over time, infections become harder to treat, raising the risk of illness and death

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How can Hand Hygiene Help?

- The hands of health care workers are the most common way microorganisms are transmitted in health care
- Cleaning hands at the right time and in the right way prevents the transmission of harmful microorganisms to patients/residents/clients, visitors and staff







Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Best practices for hand hygiene in all health care settings. 4th ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2014. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2014/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf

Why is an Updated Hand Hygiene Program Needed?

- Patients/residents/clients in the Ontario health care system are still affected by HAIs and AROs
- The updated program focuses on addressing the barriers that make hand hygiene more challenging
- Now is the time to review your hand hygiene program and decide which improvement strategies can be implemented at your setting to effectively reduce and prevent HAIs

What Makes Hand Hygiene So Challenging?

- Health care workers believe in the importance of hand hygiene and care about the safety of their patients/residents/clients
- Performing hand hygiene in a health care setting with varying demands can still be challenging

- Challenges include:
  - Lack of time
  - Frequency of hand hygiene
  - Empty supplies or inconvenient location
  - Dry skin
  - Disliking the product
  - Confusion about when and how to clean hands
  - Not feeling supported
  - Forgetting to perform hand hygiene

- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Best practices for hand hygiene in all health care settings. 4th ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2014. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2014/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf
- Glowicz JB, Landon E, Sickbert-Bennett EE, Aiello AE, deKay K, Hoffmann KK, et al. SHEA/IDSA/APIC practice recommendation: strategies to prevent healthcare-associated infections through hand hygiene: 2022 update. Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol. 2023;44(3):355-76. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1017/ice.2022.304

Introducing the New Hand Hygiene Program Strategies



Overview of Strategies

- Recognizing the challenges faced by health care workers, your new hand hygiene program includes the following strategies to support hand hygiene practice

Hand Hygiene Practices

Performing hand hygiene at recommended moments (WHEN) and with proper technique (HOW).

Hand Hygiene Improvement Strategies

Environmental Support

Ensuring environments and supports are in place to adequately support these practices.

Education

Ongoing education for health care workers including why, when and how they should perform hand hygiene.

Team-Based Problem Solving

Identifying team priority, involving local leaders and role models, providing peer support, addressing barriers and foster engaging discussions.

Habit Formation

Applying habit formation techniques to make the practice more habitual and integrated into daily work.

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Hand hygiene [Internet]. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; c2026 [cited 2026 Sept 1]. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Infection-Prevention-Control/Hand-Hygiene

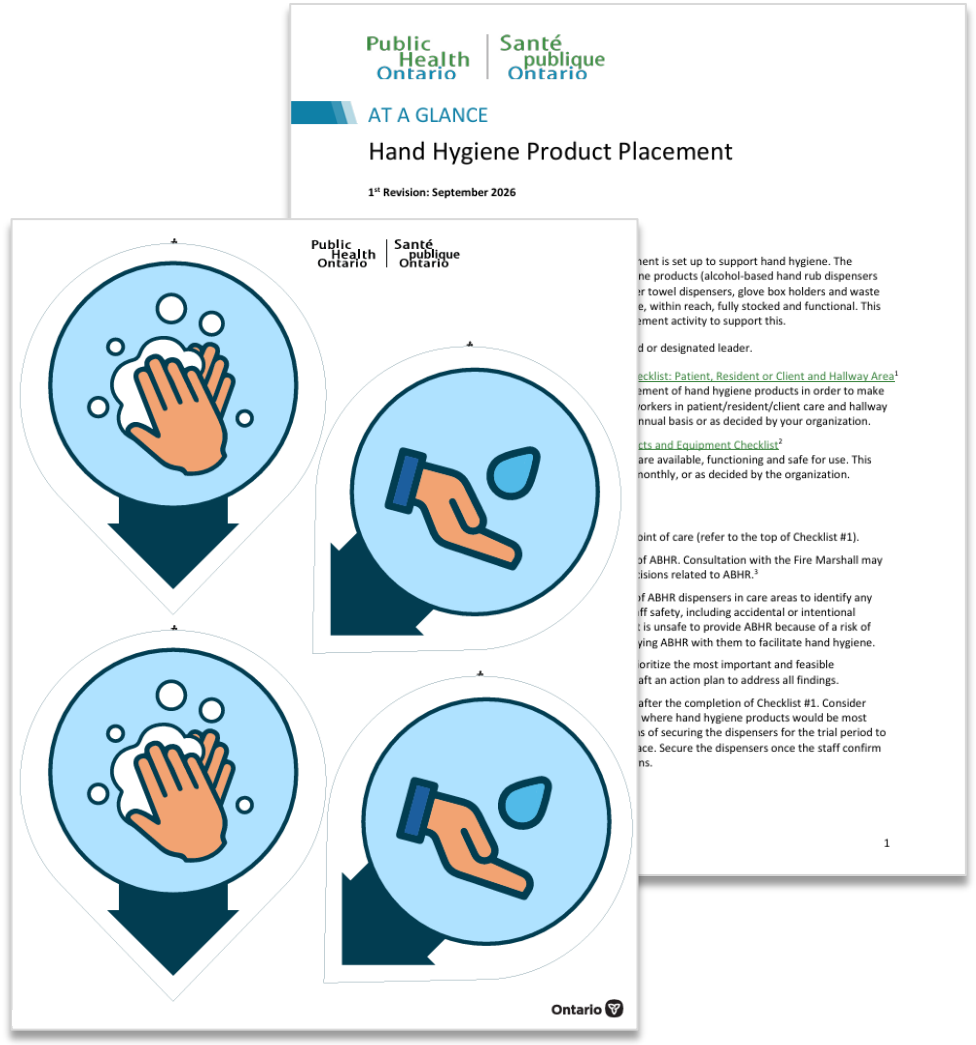
Environmental Support Strategy Overview

- Implemented first, this strategy ensures that hand hygiene products are located where they are needed, visible, within reach, fully stocked and functional
- Health care worker feedback is prioritized when placing and selecting hand hygiene products



Environmental Support Resources

- Hand Hygiene Product Placement
- Hand Hygiene Product Placement Checklist: Patient, Resident or Client and Hallway Area
- Maintenance of Hand Hygiene Products and Equipment Checklist
- Point of Care Prompt



Education Strategy Overview

- This strategy involves delivering regular education on hand hygiene and distributing educational resources to fit needs
- This improvement strategy includes updated, evidence-based resources that help remind, reinforce or build on foundational education



Education Resources: Videos and Presentations

Videos

- How to Hand Rub
- How to Hand Wash
- Putting on Gloves
- Taking off Gloves
- Barriers to Effective Hand Hygiene: Fingernails and Jewelry

Presentations

- Principles of Hand Hygiene
- Hand Hygiene Overview and New Program Strategies



Education Resources: Educational Activities and Reminders

Activities

- Take a Moment
- Practice Your Technique

Reminders

- 4 Moments of Hand Hygiene Lanyard



Education Resources: Posters

- 4 Moments of Hand Hygiene
- Caring for Your Hands
- How to Perform Hand Hygiene Using Soap and Water
- How to Perform Hand Hygiene Using ABHR



Resources for Educators

Frequently Asked Questions

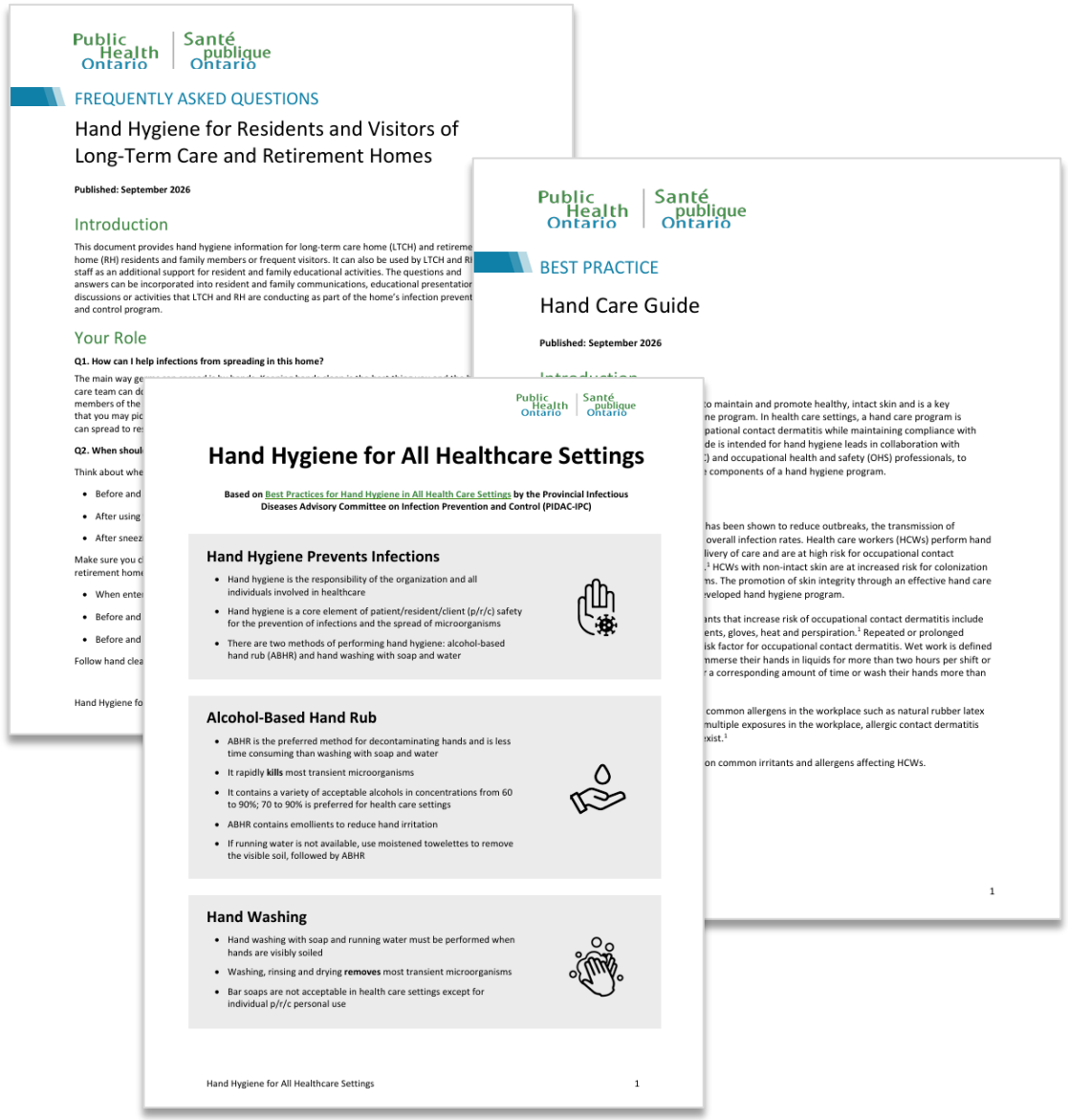
- Four Moments of Hand Hygiene
- Glove Use and Hand Hygiene
- Hand Hygiene for Residents and Visitors of LTC and RHs

Fact Sheet

- Hand Hygiene for All Health Care Settings

Hand Care

- Hand Hygiene Hand Care Guide
- How to Protect Your Skin: A Self-Assessment Checklist



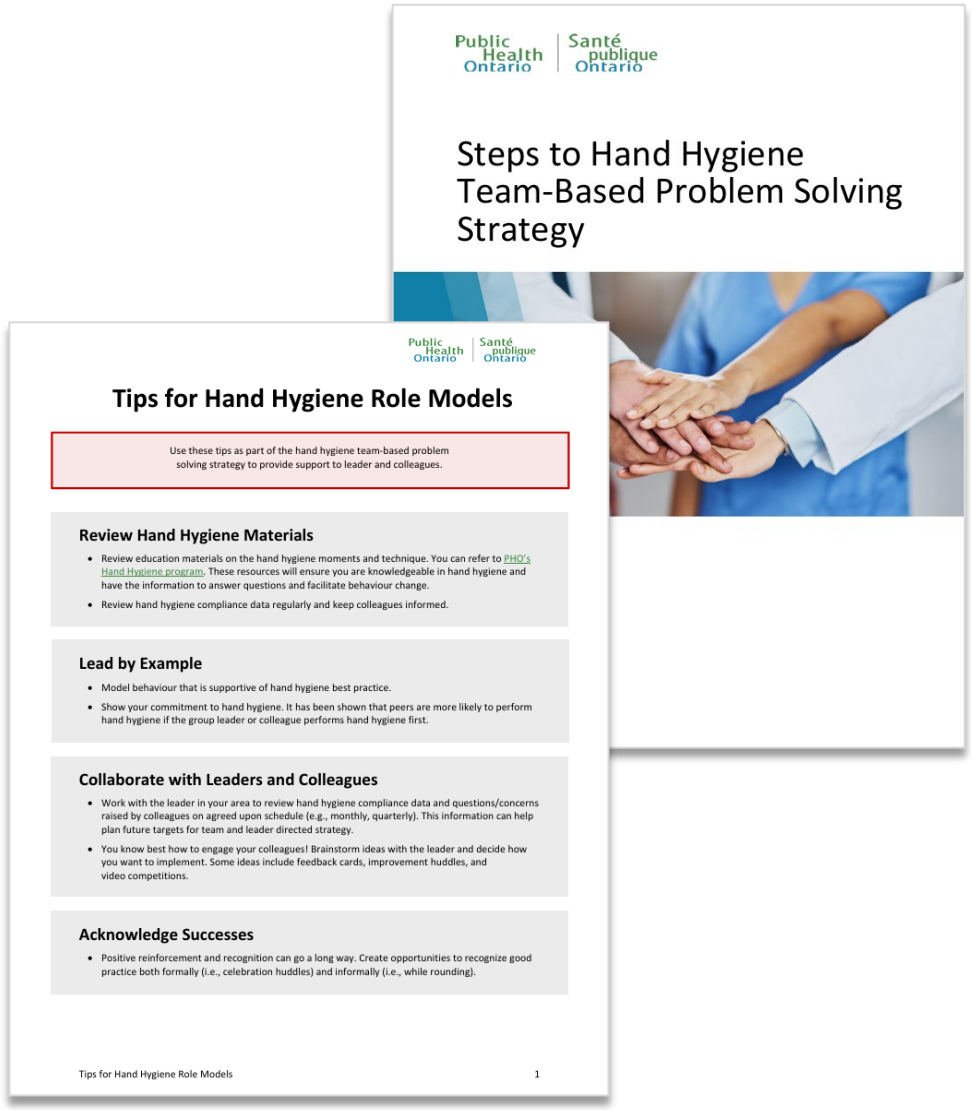
Team-Based Problem Solving Strategy

- Encourages teams to come together to work through activities and discussion
- Creates a more supportive environment for identifying and solving challenges that are faced by teams, and to celebrate improvement



Team-Based Problem Solving Resources

- Hand Hygiene Team-Based Problem-Solving Strategy
- Introduction to Team-Based Problem-Solving
- Tips for Hand Hygiene Role Models
- Techniques for Supportive Discussions About Hand Hygiene
- Providing Peer Feedback on Hand Hygiene
- Team-based Problem Solving | Public Health Ontario



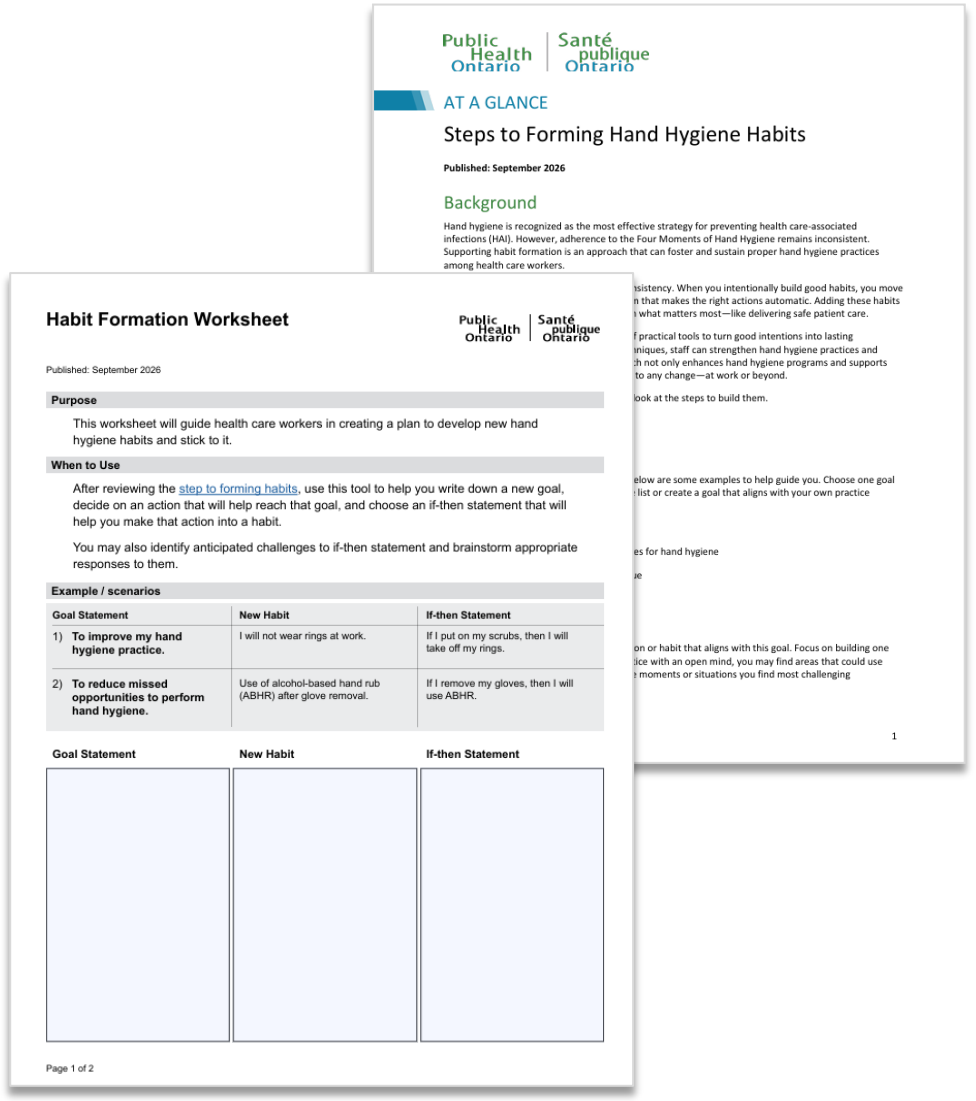
Habit Formation Strategy Overview

- When hand hygiene is performed, a lot of the when, where and how of it becomes a habit
- Habits are powerful, and new ones can be created to make hand hygiene easier and to avoid missed moments. When an action is a habit, it is more likely to be done consistently



Habit Formation Resources

- Habit Formation Video
- Steps to Forming Hand Hygiene Habits
- Habit Formation



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AT A GLANCE

Steps to Forming Hand Hygiene Habits

Published: September 2026

Background

Hand hygiene is recognized as the most effective strategy for preventing health care-associated infections (HAI). However, adherence to the Four Moments of Hand Hygiene remains inconsistent. Supporting habit formation is an approach that can foster and sustain proper hand hygiene practices among health care workers.

Habit Formation Worksheet

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Purpose

This worksheet will guide health care workers in creating a plan to develop new hand hygiene habits and stick to it.

When to Use

After reviewing the step to forming habits, use this tool to help you write down a new goal, decide on an action that will help reach that goal, and choose an if-then statement that will help you make that action into a habit.

You may also identify anticipated challenges to if-then statement and brainstorm appropriate responses to them.

Example / scenarios

Goal Statement	New Habit	If-then Statement
1) **To improve my hand hygiene practice.**	I will not wear rings at work.	If I put on my scrubs, then I will take off my rings.
2) **To reduce missed opportunities to perform hand hygiene.**	Use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) after glove removal.	If I remove my gloves, then I will use ABHR.

Goal Statement	New Habit	If-then Statement

Page 1 of 2



Considerations for Implementers

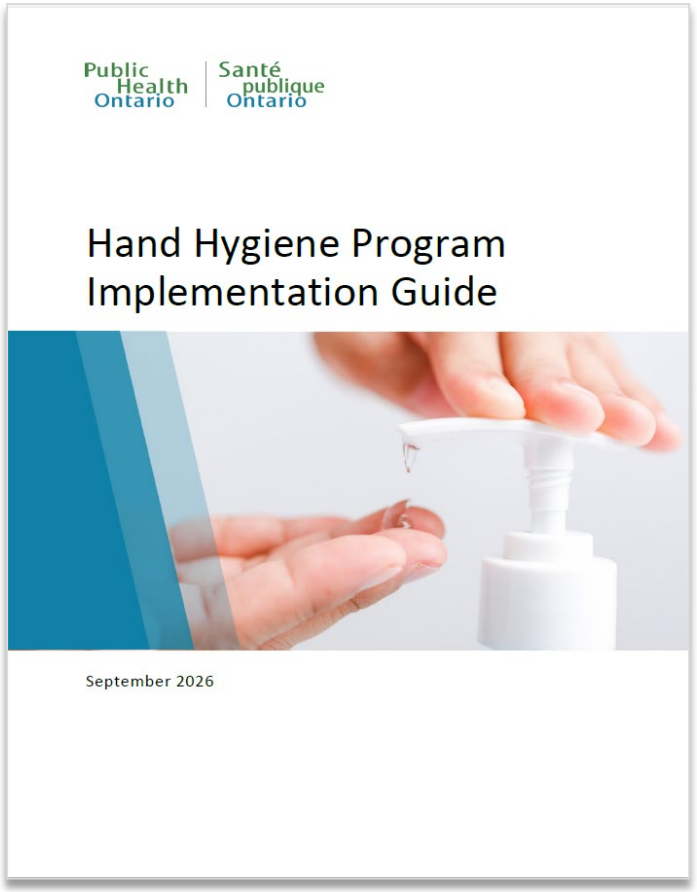
Getting Started

- Early readiness assessment and a dedicated implementation team are strong predictors of success
- Improvement strategies should be implemented in a stepped approach starting with environmental support strategies



Hand Hygiene Program Implementation Guide

- This guide is designed to walk an implementation team through the steps of implementing a hand hygiene program
- It is recommended to work through the steps in order
- Each section provides practical actions, resources, and tools to help you plan, implement, and sustain hand hygiene improvements



Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Hand hygiene program implementation guide. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2026. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/H/26/hand-hygiene/program-implementation-guide.pdf



Hand Care Program

Hand Care is a Key Component of an Effective Hand Hygiene Program

- Maintain and promote healthy, intact skin
- Prevent and manage occupational contact dermatitis



- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Recommendations for the prevention, detection and management of occupational dermatitis in health care settings. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2019. Available at: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/G/2019/guide-occupational-dermatitis.pdf? &sc_lang=en
- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Dermatitis (occupational) [Internet]. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; c2026 [cited 2026 Sept 1]. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Infection-Prevention-Control/Dermatitis

Elements of a Hand Care Program



Occupational Health Support

- Hand care assessment, including skin screening
- Periodic skin health surveillance
- Referral to occupational health if skin integrity is an issue

Education and Training

- Proper technique for hand hygiene
- Strategies for maintaining skin health at work and at home



Product Selection

- Hand moisturizing products
- Alcohol-based hand rub with emollients

Hand Care Resources: Best Practices and Checklist

Best Practices

- Hand Hygiene Hand Care Program
- Recommendations for the Prevention, Detection and Management of Occupational Contact Dermatitis in Health Care Settings
- IPAC Practices for Occupational Contact Dermatitis

Checklist

- How to Protect Your Skin: A Self-Assessment



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BEST PRACTICE

Hand Care Guide

Published: September 2026

Introduction

A successful hand care program aims to maintain and promote healthy, intact skin and is a key component of an effective hand hygiene program. In health care settings, a hand care program is essential to prevent and manage occupational contact dermatitis while maintaining compliance with hand hygiene best practices.[1] This guide is intended for hand hygiene leads in collaboration with infection prevention and control (IPAC) and occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals, to develop or enhance existing hand care components of a hand hygiene program.

Background

Improved adherence to hand hygiene has been shown to reduce outbreaks, the transmission of antimicrobial-resistant organisms and overall infection rates. Health care workers (HCWs) perform hand hygiene frequently throughout the delivery of care and are at high risk for occupational contact dermatitis, particularly on their hands.[2] HCWs with non-intact skin are at increased risk for colonization and transmission of microbial organisms. The promotion of skin integrity through an effective hand care program is a must, as part of a well-developed hand hygiene program.

Among HCWs, the most common irritants that increase risk of occupational contact dermatitis include wet work, hand cleansers, cleaning agents, gloves, heat and perspiration.[3] Repeated or prolonged exposure to wet work is a significant risk factor for occupational contact dermatitis. Wet work is defined as "activities where workers have to immerse their hands in liquids for more than two hours per shift or wear waterproof (occlusive) gloves for a corresponding amount of time or wash their hands more than 20 times per shift".[3]

HCWs may also be exposed to several common allergens in the workplace such as natural rubber latex and various antiseptics. As a result of multiple exposures in the workplace, allergic contact dermatitis and irritant contact dermatitis can coexist.[3]

See Appendix A for more information on common irritants and allergens affecting HCWs.

Hand Care Guide 1

Hand Care Resources: Posters, Videos, Guides and Checklist

Poster

- Caring for your Hands

Videos

- How to Hand Rub
- How to Hand Wash
- Barriers to Effective Hand Hygiene

FAQ

- Glove Use and Hand Hygiene

Checklist

- Glove Selection

Guide

- Glove Selection
- Cotton Glove Liner Selection



Continuous Quality Improvement

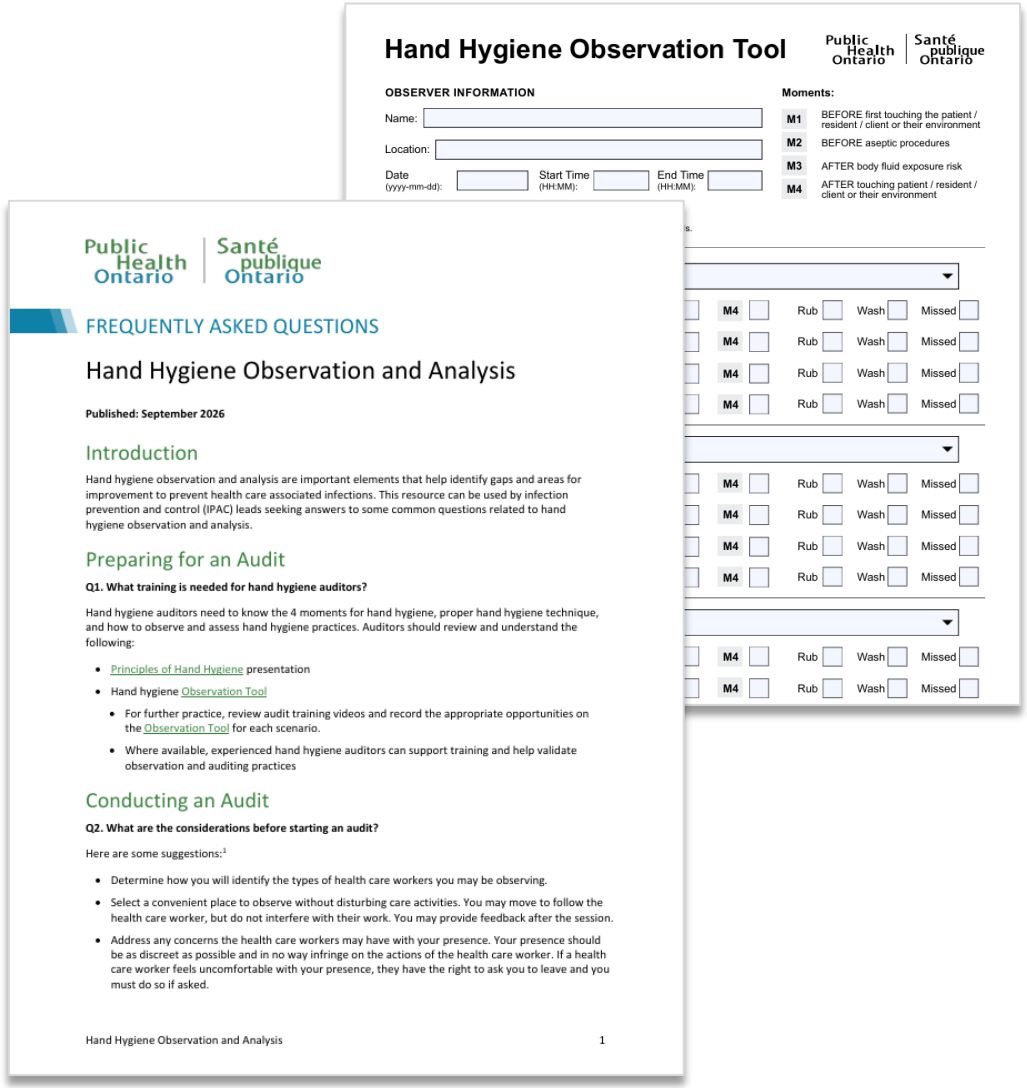
Continuous Quality Improvement

- Evaluation ensures programs are delivered with quality to support sustainable practice change
- Planning for evaluation provides an opportunity to embed processes to gather feedback from staff before delivering hand hygiene improvement strategies



Continuous Quality Improvement Resources

- Frequently Asked Questions on Hand Hygiene Observation and Analysis
- Hand Hygiene Observation Tool



Key Highlights

- Hand hygiene is an effective strategy to prevent health care-associated infections (HAIs) and antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs)
- The updated hand hygiene program builds on best practices and focuses on putting improvement strategies into action to address persistent challenges
- Hand care programs should include skin assessments, education and training, and moisturizing products to keep skin healthy and intact.

For More Information About This Presentation, Contact:

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