



Supporting resource CM/05: Frequently asked questions for media enquiries

Key messages

- Clean hands save lives.
- The campaign aims to improve the hand hygiene of healthcare workers to help prevent healthcare associated infections (HCAI).
- The campaign is designed to be harder hitting, using stronger messages, to convey the seriousness of the issue.
- The promotion of alcohol handrub is a cornerstone of the campaign as it promotes action, through being available at the **point of care**, and allowing staff to clean their hands quickly and effectively.

Q. What is the hand hygiene campaign?

A. The hand hygiene campaign aims to improve the hand hygiene of healthcare workers to prevent the spread of infection and help the HSC to tackle HCAI.

The key components of the campaign toolkit are the provision of alcohol handrub at the point of patient care; prompts and other materials to remind staff to clean their hands; involving patients in hand hygiene improvement with the phrase *it's OK to ask*; and supporting local campaign co-ordination with tools and resources to engage staff at all levels of their organisation.

Q. Our hospitals are filthy – why aren't you tackling that?

A. The focus of the campaign is on hand hygiene as a key way in which infections are spread and therefore where we can make the most impact. Other initiatives are looking at other issues around hospital cleanliness and HCAI more widely.

Q. Why are healthcare workers still not cleaning their hands?

A. Healthcare workers **are** cleaning their hands, but some are not cleaning them as often as they could. There are many barriers for healthcare workers in cleaning their hands. Providing alcohol handrub overcomes one of the largest barriers as it enables healthcare workers to clean their hands quickly and effectively when it counts – at the point of patient care.

Q. Won't staff get irritated if patients start asking them to clean their hands?

A. Encouraging patients to feel comfortable asking when they think staff may not have cleaned their hands has already been a part of the campaign in previous years. On the whole, staff are keen to make this work.

Q. Isn't it unfair to rely on patients to monitor staff hand washing?

A. The campaign does not rely on patients to monitor staff hand hygiene; it encourages them to support improvement through understanding the importance of hand hygiene in infection



prevention and control and feel comfortable reminding staff if they think they've forgotten to clean their hands. There is no obligation for patients to ask, hence the phrase used on the campaign materials, *it's OK to ask*. The campaign aims to empower patients by giving them information and making them feel comfortable and confident about their own care.

Q. Aren't visitors a problem?

A. The focus of the campaign is on healthcare workers as they have the greatest potential to transfer the micro-organisms that cause infections as they move between patients and different care activities with the same patient. Visitors and patients are highly unlikely to touch a patient in susceptible areas of the body and then even less likely to touch another patient similarly. Therefore, by improving the hand hygiene of healthcare workers, we hope to have the most impact in terms of preventing infection. Some trusts have chosen to provide alcohol handrub for patients and visitors to use which raises the profile of hand hygiene generally.

Additional FAQs can be found in the co-ordinators' handbook.

