

ASANTE® News

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Who's Responsible for Preventing Infection? Everyone

By Dr. Jamie Grebosky

(EDITOR'S NOTE: A new hand-hygiene campaign kicked off at all three Asante hospitals on Nov. 2, and hand-hygiene is also a part of this year's PEAK employee rewards program. The goal is to increase hand-washing compliance, especially among direct caregivers, and prevent the spread of infection in Asante hospitals.)

We've all been there. You're on your way to see one patient, but need to stop first to see another patient. You pass by the hand sanitizer because this is just a brief conversation and you won't be touching anyone.



Yet in that brief meeting, you've touched the doorknob, the bed railing, the chair. In short, you've introduced a host of

microorganisms to that environment, any one of which could make the patient sick.

This is one reason health-care-associated infections cause 75,000 deaths per year in the United States. Despite this, physicians, clinical staff, and others with direct patient contact don't always practice strict hand hygiene. Nor do they always don personal protective equipment when entering rooms with isolation precautions – a critical step for preventing the spread of C. diff.

If we are to have a true “culture of safety,” every person working in the hospital is responsible for infection prevention. This means that a staff member of any rank and from any department should feel free to remind you to clean your hands or wear

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Clean Hands: It's a Rule

Chances are, you haven't logged onto myAsanteNET, clicked the Policies tab and searched for “hand hygiene” to download Asante's current policy on hand hygiene ([400-IC-0004](#)). But the policy includes specific guidelines on hand-cleaning.

When To Use Soap And Water

If you're an employee, volunteer, contract staff member or physician, you must wash your hands with soap and water:

- When hands are visibly soiled or contaminated with blood or body fluids
- Before eating
- After using the restroom
- If you've been exposed to Bacillus anthracis
- After removing gloves when caring for a patient with Clostridium difficile infection, norovirus, or other conditions requiring contact enteric precautions

When To Use Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

Just like soap, hospital gel or foam dispensers are your friend. Remember to use hand-rub:

- Before direct contact with patients, regardless of glove use
- Before donning sterile gloves for invasive procedures
- Before handling food
- After removing gloves or other personal protective equipment
- After contact with a patient's skin (e.g., taking pulse or blood pressure, lifting a patient)
- After touching medical equipment or other items near a patient
- After personal contact that may contaminate hands (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, covering a sneeze)

personal protective equipment.

To ensure that we're all complying with infection prevention efforts, audits will be performed and physicians and staff held accountable.

By looking out for each other, we can ensure that we're protecting ourselves and our patients from unnecessary harm. So when another member of your health-care team reminds you about hand hygiene, remember to thank them!

Jamie Grebosky, MD, is vice president for medical affairs at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center and Asante Ashland Community Hospital. Dr. Grebosky is also the executive sponsor of the Asante Hand-Hygiene Campaign.

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