



HAND WASHING, RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE – YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

**Tips for staff, residents and
visitors of elderly houses**

WHY HAND WASHING IS IMPORTANT IN ELDERLY HOMES

Hand washing is one of the most effective, low-cost measures to reduce infections in elderly homes.

ELDERLY RESIDENTS ARE MORE VULNERABLE



Aging weakens the immune system, making it harder for the body to fight infections.



Many residents may have **chronic conditions** (e.g., diabetes, heart disease) that further reduce their ability to recover from illness.



Even minor **infections** can lead to serious complications, hospitalizations, or death in the elderly.



IMPORTANCE FOR STAFF

Prevention of Disease Transmission: Staff frequently move between residents, rooms, and shared facilities. Without proper hand hygiene, they can carry pathogens (like bacteria, viruses, and fungi) from one resident to another.

Protecting Themselves: Staff are also at risk of becoming infected. Hand washing reduces the risk of picking up or spreading infections such as norovirus, influenza, or MRSA.



Compliance with Healthcare Standards: Regular hand hygiene is a basic requirement in healthcare settings and is part of professional duty and legal obligations.

IMPORTANCE FOR INHABITANTS



Personal Safety: Encouraging hand hygiene among residents helps them protect themselves—especially before eating or after using the bathroom.



Reduction in Cross-Infection: Even if one resident becomes ill, good hygiene can prevent others from catching the illness, especially in shared dining, recreational, or bathroom areas.



Empowerment: Promoting hand hygiene habits fosters a sense of independence and awareness of personal health.

FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS TO ENSURE YOUR HANDS ARE THOROUGHLY CLEANED

When to Wash Your Hands:



Before and after
preparing food



After coughing,
sneezing, or blowing
your nose



After using the
toilet



After touching pets
or animals



Before eating



After handling
garbage



Whenever your hands
look dirty



STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE HAND WASHING:



Wet Your Hands: Start with clean, running water (warm or cold), and apply soap.



Lather Thoroughly: Rub your hands together to create a lather. Be sure to cover the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



Scrub for 20 Seconds: Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice.



Rinse Well: Hold your hands under clean, running water until all the soap is washed away.



Dry Completely: Use a clean towel or air dry your hands.

HELPFUL TIPS:



Use Sanitizer When Necessary:

If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Avoid Touching Your Face:

Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent germs from entering your body.

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE IN ELDERLY HOMES

Cough hygiene (also known as respiratory etiquette) is another critical practice in elderly homes to prevent the spread of infections, especially respiratory ones like influenza, COVID-19, RSV, and even the common cold.



WHY COUGH HYGIENE IS IMPORTANT IN ELDERLY HOMES

Elderly residents are at high risk of serious illness from respiratory infections:



Older adults are much more susceptible to serious complications from respiratory infections like influenza, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumonia.



Many residents have underlying health conditions that can make even a mild illness life-threatening.



Coughing and sneezing can release droplets containing viruses into the air or onto surfaces, where they can infect others.



Poor cough hygiene can cause rapid outbreaks in communal living settings.

COUGH HYGIENE TIPS FOR ELDERLY HOMES



Use a Tissue or Elbow

- ▶ Always cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ Best option: Use a tissue, then dispose of it immediately, in closed bins.
- ▶ If a tissue isn't available: Cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.

Perform Hand Hygiene After Coughing



- ▶ Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer immediately after coughing, sneezing, or touching used tissues.
- ▶ Staff should reinforce this habit with reminders or visual cues (like posters).

Maintain Distance When Ill



- ▶ Residents or staff with symptoms should avoid close contact with others when possible.
- ▶ Isolate symptomatic residents (when appropriate) until they're no longer infectious.

WHY FACE MASK WEARING IS IMPORTANT IN ELDERLY HOMES

▶ **Prevents Transmission:** Staff can carry respiratory viruses without symptoms. Masks help prevent the spread of airborne droplets when talking, coughing, or sneezing.

▶ **Protects Residents:** Since staff interact closely with residents (e.g., during feeding, bathing, medical care), wearing masks reduces the risk of passing infections to them.

Protects Themselves and Co-workers: Masks also help staff avoid catching and spreading viruses among themselves, which could lead to staff shortages and further risks to resident care.

Ensure masks fit snugly, covering the nose, mouth, and chin without gaps.

Avoid touching the mask while wearing it; if touched, perform hand hygiene immediately. Dispose of used masks properly and perform hand hygiene after removal.





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