

Monitoring of hand hygiene in hospitals



Correct hand hygiene is one of the most important ways of stopping the spread of infection.

This can be through regular hand washing or cleaning using a hand hygiene product and may depend on the situation and/or whether hands are visibly dirty.

In a hospital setting, an approved hand hygiene product (usually a gel or foam) should be readily available where it is needed (for example at the end of every bed or inside every private room). Sinks are generally available in each ward or room.

Trained observers collect data at all public and most private hospitals in Victoria to assess whether or not hand hygiene is being correctly performed (in the right way and at the appropriate times). Hospitals are expected to monitor hand hygiene across the hospital, but particularly in areas where there are very vulnerable patients such as intensive care units and cancer wards.

There are particular times when it is most important for healthcare workers to perform hand hygiene, for example before and after they carry out a procedure (e.g. inserting a needle, taking blood or changing a wound dressing). This applies whether or not they wear gloves for the procedure. Wearing gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Information on hand hygiene compliance collated at VICNISS is passed on to the Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI) within the Department of Health, and are also shared nationally.

Data on hand hygiene compliance rates at individual hospitals in Victoria are published and are available at vahi.vic.gov.au/quality-and-safety/infection-prevention-and-control