Procedure: Hand hygiene

Purpose

To assist staff who need to consider hand hygiene measures to help protect themselves from infectious disease transmission.

Procedure

1. Some positions across the ANU campus require members of staff to greet large numbers of people with physical contact such as shaking hands. This situation involves the risk of the hands becoming contaminated by microorganisms, which may then enter the body through abrasions of the skin or through hand transfer to the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, and mouth). Examples may include someone with a cold or Influenza, sneezing or coughing into their hand, then shaking hands, allowing transfer of infectious organisms.

2. For those staff in positions that require contact with many different people, some general precautions are advisable to reduce the chances of disease transmission.

3. Cover any cuts or abrasions on the hands with an occlusive waterproof dressing. Areas to which this information applies should ensure that such dressings are available in their first aid kits.

4. Try to remember not to touch any part of your face with your hands after public contact until they have been thoroughly washed with soap and water.

5. Whenever practicable after having physical contact with the public a staff member should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.

6. When it is not practicable to wash hands after each encounter, the area should supply an antiseptic hand rub (e.g. an alcohol-based gel) to the staff member, for use after public contact.

7. The hand rub should be used as per the directions on the container.

8. The staff member should still wash their hands with soap and water when it becomes possible, even after using the antiseptic hand rub (e.g. before eating food).
9. The use of a barrier cream or moisturising cream can help maintain skin integrity and protect against dermatitis, which may be the result of frequent hand washing or use of antiseptic rubs.

10. If there is an instance where visible contamination of the hands occurs after contact with another person (eg, blood, mucous), the hands should be washed immediately and thoroughly with soap and water. After washing with soap and water a disinfectant hand wash may be used (eg chlorhexidine). An incident report should be submitted as soon as possible to the Work Environment Group (Human Resources Division) via the online incident notification system found at: **Incident Notification Procedure**.

11. This procedure is not relevant to first aid attendants or laboratory staff. These staff should refer to other procedures including: **Provision of first aid services procedure** and **Immunisation procedure**.