

Hand hygiene competency assessment tool

A practical assessment tool for assessing workforce hand hygiene competency

This tool has been developed to support health service organisations to meet the requirements of the hand hygiene actions of the [National Safety and Quality Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standards](#) and the [National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards](#).

The use of this tool is optional. It can be used on its own or with other [hand hygiene monitoring tools](#) or as part of clinical competency assessments, such as for aseptic technique. This tool can be used in all healthcare settings, including non-acute, primary care and mental health settings where direct hand hygiene observational auditing is not recommended.

Why is hand hygiene technique important?

Effective hand hygiene is important to prevent healthcare-associated infections. If hands are not cleaned properly, they may spread infection.

How to use the hand hygiene competency assessment tool

This tool can be used for teaching or for assessment. It has two parts:

Part A - Performing hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)

Part B - Performing hand hygiene using soap and water.

To be deemed competent in performing hand hygiene, the healthcare worker (HCW) must be observed and assessed as meeting **all the performance criteria in Part A and Part B**. If a HCW did not meet a performance criterion, comments should be recorded and feedback provided to the HCW. If necessary, the HCW should be reassessed.

Assessor responsibilities

The assessor should have education or training qualifications or experience that enables them to assess HCWs to perform a practical skill. The assessor should also be able to perform hand hygiene correctly.

Before commencing this competency assessment, assessors should ensure that the HCW has access to appropriate hand hygiene products and to a hand washing basin.

The assessor should provide the HCW with feedback during or immediately after the assessment. This will ensure that the feedback is timely, objective and specific to what was observed. Feedback should include what was done well and what can be improved. The information provided in the rationale section of the assessment tool can be used by the assessor to inform the feedback provided to the HCW.

Healthcare worker responsibilities

Before commencing this competency assessment, the HCW should:

- Review their organisation's policies, guidelines and other relevant hand hygiene resources
- Comply with the organisation's policies on the wearing of jewellery, artificial fingernails or nail polish by HCWs
- Ensure that if long sleeves are worn, the sleeves are pushed back so their hands can be cleaned effectively
- Have intact skin on their hands (no open wounds). Intact skin is a natural defence against infection. Cuts and abrasions are possible sources of entry for infectious agents and reduce the effectiveness of hand hygiene. If skin is not intact, ensure that it is covered with a protective waterproof dressing.

Hand hygiene resources

The performance criteria and rationale for this competency assessment are informed by the:

- World Health Organization (WHO) - Save Lives- Clean your hands – [How to handrub](#) and [How to handwash](#) posters.
- [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#), Section 3.1.1 Hand Hygiene
- [WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care. First Global Patient Safety Challenge Clean Care is Safer Care.](#)

National Hand Hygiene Initiative (NHHI) resources:

- [eLearning modules](#)
- [Factsheets, posters and videos](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs).

Part A: Performing hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)

Performing hand hygiene using ABHR should take at least 20-30 seconds, including drying.

Refer to the World Health Organization (WHO) - Save Lives - Clean your hands – [How to handrub](#) poster for images of each step.

HCW name: _____		Date: _____	
Department: _____			
Assessor name: _____			
Assessor role: _____			

Performance criteria	Rationale	Y/N	Comments
1. The HCW identified the appropriate hand hygiene method	Washing hands with soap and water is required if hands are visibly soiled. Soap and water or ABHR should be used if hands are visibly clean.		
2. The HCW applied the appropriate volume of ABHR product into a cupped hand and distributed the ABHR across both hands and wrists to cover all surfaces.	The correct amount of hand hygiene product is used to completely cover all surfaces of the hands and wrists. Refer to product instructions for use for correct volume.		
3. Hands were rubbed together, palm to palm.	ABHR needs to cover all surfaces of the hands and wrist to remove or kill microorganisms.		
4. Hands were rubbed with the right palm over the left dorsum with interlaced fingers and hands were rubbed with the left palm over the right dorsum with interlaced fingers.			
5. Hands were rubbed palm to palm and fingers were interlaced.			
6. Hands were joined with fingers interlocked and the back of fingers were rubbed against the opposing palm.			
7. Rotational rubbing of the left thumb by the clasped right hand was performed and rotational rubbing of the right thumb by the clasped left hand was performed.			

Performance Criteria	Rationale	Y/N	Comments
8. The left palm was rotationally rubbed with the clasped fingers of the right hand and the right palm was rotationally rubbed with the clasped fingers of the left hand.	ABHR needs to cover all surfaces of the hands and wrists to remove or kill microorganisms.		
9. Hands were left to air dry before touching anything.	Drying hands is an integral part of hand hygiene. Wet hands can more readily acquire and spread microorganisms.		

Part A: Performing hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)

Assessed as competent: ☐ Yes ☐ Not yet

Comments/feedback: _____

Assessor's signature: _____

Healthcare worker's signature: _____

Planned review date (if required): _____

Part B: Performing hand hygiene using soap and water

Performing hand hygiene using soap and water should take approximately 40-60 seconds, including drying. Refer to the World Health Organization (WHO) - Save Lives - Clean your hands – [How to handwash](#) poster for images of each step.

HCW name: _____		Date: _____	
Department: _____			
Assessor name: _____			
Assessor role: _____			
Performance criteria	Rationale	Y/N	Comments
1. The HCW identified the appropriate hand cleaning method.	Washing hands with soap and water is required if hands are visibly soiled. Soap and water or ABHR should be used if hands are visibly clean.		
2. Hands were wet with clean water.	Wetting hands before applying soap helps to generate a lather and reduces potential skin irritation associated with soap use.		
3. The HCW applied enough liquid soap* to the palm of the hand to cover all surfaces of the hands and wrists.	The correct amount of hand hygiene product is used to completely cover all surfaces of the hands and wrists. Refer to product instructions for use for correct volume.		
4. Hands were rubbed together, palm to palm under the running water	Rubbing hands together creates friction and ensures that the soap comes into contact with all surfaces of the hands and wrists to remove dirt and microorganisms.		
5. Hands were rubbed with the right palm over the left dorsum with interlaced fingers and hands were rubbed with the left palm over the right dorsum with interlaced fingers.			
6. Hands were rubbed with palm to palm, and fingers interlaced			
7. Hands were joined with fingers interlocked and back of fingers rubbed against opposing palm.			

Performance Criteria	Rationale	Y/N	Comments
8. Rotational rubbing of the left thumb by the clasped right hand was performed and rotational rubbing of the right thumb by the clasped left hand was performed.	Rubbing hands together creates friction and ensures that the soap comes into contact with all surfaces of the hands and wrists to remove dirt and microorganisms		
9. The left palm was rotationally rubbed with clasped fingers of the right hand and the right palm was rotationally rubbed with clasped fingers of the left hand.			
10. The HCW washed each wrist using a cupped hand to cover all surfaces around the wrist.			
11. Hands were rinsed with water and soap removed.	Rinsing removes the soap lather from the hands.		
12. Hands were thoroughly dried with a single use paper towel.	Wet hands can more readily acquire and spread microorganisms, so the proper drying of hands is an integral part of routine hand hygiene. Single-use paper towels are the most effective way to dry hands and reduce the risk of the transmission of microorganisms.		
13. A clean paper towel was used to turn off tap (if not hands-free tap).	To avoid recontamination of clean hands		

Part B: Performing hand hygiene using soap and water

Assessed as competent: ☐ Yes ☐ Not yet

Comments/feedback: _____

Assessor's signature: _____

Healthcare worker's signature: _____

Planned review date (if required): _____

For more information, please visit: [National Hand Hygiene Initiative \(NHHI\)](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/nhhi)

[safetyandquality.gov.au](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au)



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