

Why is hand hygiene so important?

- Hands are used for all sorts of activities during the course of a day.
- Hands easily become contaminated with micro-organisms or germs e.g. after using the toilet.

When should hand hygiene be performed?

- Before handling the catheter
- Before eating and drinking or handling food
- After using the toilet
- After handling rubbish
- After touching public surfaces
- Whenever hands look or feel dirty.

For effective hand hygiene:

- Wet hands with running water and then apply liquid soap
- Rub soap over all surfaces of your hands, including between your fingers, thumbs and back of hands
- Wash your hands for at least 10 seconds
- Rinse your hands well and dry thoroughly with disposable paper towels
- Alcohol hand rubs may also be used for hand hygiene
- Apply alcohol hand rub, rub over all surfaces of your hands, including between your fingers, thumbs and back of hands
- Allow hands to dry.

Key points

- Do not touch the catheter where possible.
- Remind others who touch the catheter to perform hand hygiene first.
- Perform hand hygiene before touching your catheter.
- Keep clothing near the catheter site clean and dry.
- If you notice your catheter site is sore or red or causing you pain, please tell the nurse/doctor looking after you.
- Do not submerge your catheter in water unless you have been advised by medical staff it is safe to do so.

For more information please ask the nurse looking after you, contact the facility's Infection Control Unit, or refer to:

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/infection-prevention/intravascular-device-management/default.asp>

Preventing infections in vascular access



Information for patients and carers

What is an indwelling venous catheter?

These devices allow venous access. Some devices are suitable to allow venous access for a period of months or even years.

An intravenous catheter (drip) will be inserted through your skin into your vein. Other indwelling venous catheters are usually inserted into major veins with a section tunnelled under the skin.

An indwelling venous catheter will allow nurses and doctors to undertake a number of different tasks. This may include giving medication or fluids.

One of the possible complications of having an intravenous catheter can be infection. Infection can occur at the site where the catheter is inserted or in your blood which is called a bloodstream infection. It is very important for everyone including yourself, to be very careful when handling the catheter, lines, connections and infusion bags.

The following advice is relevant where ever your care is given. This could be in the community or in hospital.

Help to prevent infection

- Only touch the catheter when you have to
- Perform hand hygiene before touching the catheter
- Remind others who touch the catheter (including staff) to clean their hands first
- Showering is recommended to prevent the line from being submerged in water
- Avoid having a bath or swimming until advised it is safe to do so by your doctor
- Have a shower daily to keep your skin clean
- If you have a line with fluid hanging—don't disconnect (or allow others to disconnect) the line to have a shower
- If you have a line with fluid hanging—avoid getting it wet
- Wear clean clothes next to the catheter and change them every day or if they become wet
- Do not pull on the catheter or line
- Ask your nurse about dressings
- If you notice that your catheter site is sore or red or causing you pain, please tell the nurse/doctor looking after you immediately.

Please tell staff if you experience any of the following:

- Pain at puncture site
 - When the fluids/medication are given
 - When the catheter is not in use
 - When blood is taken
 - At any other time
- The area around the catheter looks red, swollen or feels hot
- You feel hot/cold/shivery
- The dressing becomes loose, gets wet or falls off
- The catheter becomes loose or dislodged.

Signs of infection

- Exit site becomes red, swollen, sore or discharges fluid
- Redness along the skin above the line
- You feel unwell or develop a high temperature, especially after the line has been flushed.