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Hand hygiene protects both healthcare personnel and patients. Hand hygiene means cleaning your hands with:

Cleaning your hands reduces:

Some healthcare personnel may need to clean their hands as often as 100 times during a work shift to keep themselves, patients and staff safe. A common challenge is keeping the skin on your hands healthy and clean. CDC provides the following recommendations for hand hygiene in healthcare settings. Unless hands are visibly soiled, ABHS is preferred over soap and water in most clinical situations because it¹²:

Note: Other entities recommend cleaning hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Either time is acceptable. The focus should be on cleaning your hands at the right times and scrubbing hands and fingers with soap. ABHS is an FDA-regulated over-the-counter product that should be stored and dispensed in an effective and safe manner. The safety of refilling or "topping off" containers of ABHS such as pump bottles, pocket-sized dispenser bottles and single-use wall-mounted dispensers of ABHS is not well studied. Safety risks associated with refilling or "topping off" containers of ABHS include:

Therefore, refilling or "topping off" ABHS dispensers should only be considered in accordance with manufacturer's guidance and FDA regulations. Refilling or "topping off" containers of liquid soap has been associated with outbreaks of pathogenic bacteria. Soap should not be added to partially empty soap dispensers.²

Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene. C. difficile is a spore-forming bacterium that can lead to a common healthcare-associated infection causing severe diarrhea. Spores are an inactive form of the germ and have a protective coating allowing them to live on surfaces for months. The bacteria can be transferred to patients via the hands of healthcare providers who have touched a contaminated surface or item. This is recommended due to the theoretical increased efficacy of soap and water for removing spores from hands, although evidence for this recommendation is limited. Proper use of

gloves (in addition to a gown) to reduce bioburden on the hands should be emphasized. Access to ABHS should not be restricted. Bacteria on the hands of surgeons can cause wound infections if present in the operative field during surgery. Bacterial growth slows after preoperative scrubbing with an antiseptic agent. Before donning sterile gloves and performing surgery, perform surgical hand antisepsis using the following steps: Other recommended steps: ABHS contains ethyl alcohol, which evaporates at room temperature into an ignitable vapor, and is considered a flammable liquid. Although ABHS-related fires are rare it is vital that ABHS is stored safely and bulk dispensers are installed and maintained correctly. Building officers and fire marshals work together to enforce fire safety rules to protect patients and residents. Fire safety activities help to: Building officers and local fire marshals also work together to ensure ABHS dispensers are accessible and in locations that do not increase the risk of igniting or spreading a fire. Adherence to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code 101 was adopted by CMS. This code is a minimum fire safety requirement for facilities that receive Medicaid or Medicare reimbursement. The Life Safety Code contains national standards for the storage of ABHS, as well as placement and function of dispensers. When facilities use ABHS the criteria listed in Table 1 must be met. Healthcare facilities may contact their local fire officials to ensure they meet all requirements for the installation of ABHS. Local fire officials often inspect commercial buildings and may be required to do so. Tours from local fire officials can help healthcare facilities: There are several benefits to the healthcare facilities requesting a tour such as: Table 1. NFPA 101 Life Safety Code Requirements for the use of ABHS Dispensers CDC provides resources and training on hand hygiene for healthcare providers. Having clean hands is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others. Languages Language Assistance Languages Language Assistance

