

# North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

## FACTS ON HAND HYGIENE

Hand hygiene removes visible dirt from your hands and reduces the number of germs on your hands.

This makes it less likely that germs will be spread from your hands to your food, wounds and to surfaces that others may touch.

### How can I be sure I have good hand hygiene?

Usually plain soap and water will do the job. If the water is not safe for drinking because of germs (bacteria, viruses or parasites), good handwashing with soap and water should be followed up with hand disinfection for good hand hygiene.

### What is hand disinfection?

Hand disinfection is the use of additional agents to kill germs living on your hands. This may be done using alcohol based rubs/gels/rinses.

### What are alcohol rubs/gels/rinses?

Alcohol rubs/gels/rinses are excellent hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol. They are widely used in the health care setting after washing hands, or in situations where water is not available.

### How do I use alcohol based hand disinfectants?

Dirt should be removed from your hands. Alcohol based hand disinfectants work best on clean skin, so wash your hands with soap and warm water, even if the water is not fit to drink.

Carefully dry your hands, as water on wet hands will dilute the alcohol content of the disinfectant product, decreasing its effectiveness.

Apply enough disinfectant to make about the size of a dime onto your hands, then rub your hands with the disinfectant covering all areas of your hands, including under your nails. Use a rubbing motion to evenly distribute the disinfectant product for about 15 seconds, or until your hands feel dry whichever is longest.

### How safe are alcohol based hand disinfectants?

Very safe. The alcohol content of the disinfectant product completely evaporates in 15 seconds. You should use hand lotion after each use of the alcohol based hand disinfectant. This will balance the drying effect of alcohol on your skin.

### Is it safe to use alcohol-base disinfectant for the hands of children?

Yes, it is safe. It should not be swallowed; therefore, young children should be supervised when using it. Store it safely. After application of the disinfectant to hands the alcohol content evaporates, and children can safely touch their mouth and eyes.

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#### Main Office