CLINICAL SKILLS TRAINING · MODULE IPC-02

Clean hands, safe care: the 5 Moments for hand hygiene in practice

20-minute module for nurses, healthcare assistants, doctors and allied health professionals

Infection Prevention & Control Team, Riverside General Hospital

1. Before touching a patient
2. Before clean/aseptic procedure
3. After body fluid exposure risk
4. After touching a patient
5. After touching surroundings

Sample — fictional data. Riverside General Hospital, its staff, patients and audit figures are invented for portfolio purposes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module you will be able to…

1

Identify

the 5 Moments for hand hygiene during routine patient care

2

Choose

between alcohol-based hand rub and soap and water for each situation

3

Perform

the 6-step hand rub technique correctly in 20–30 seconds

4

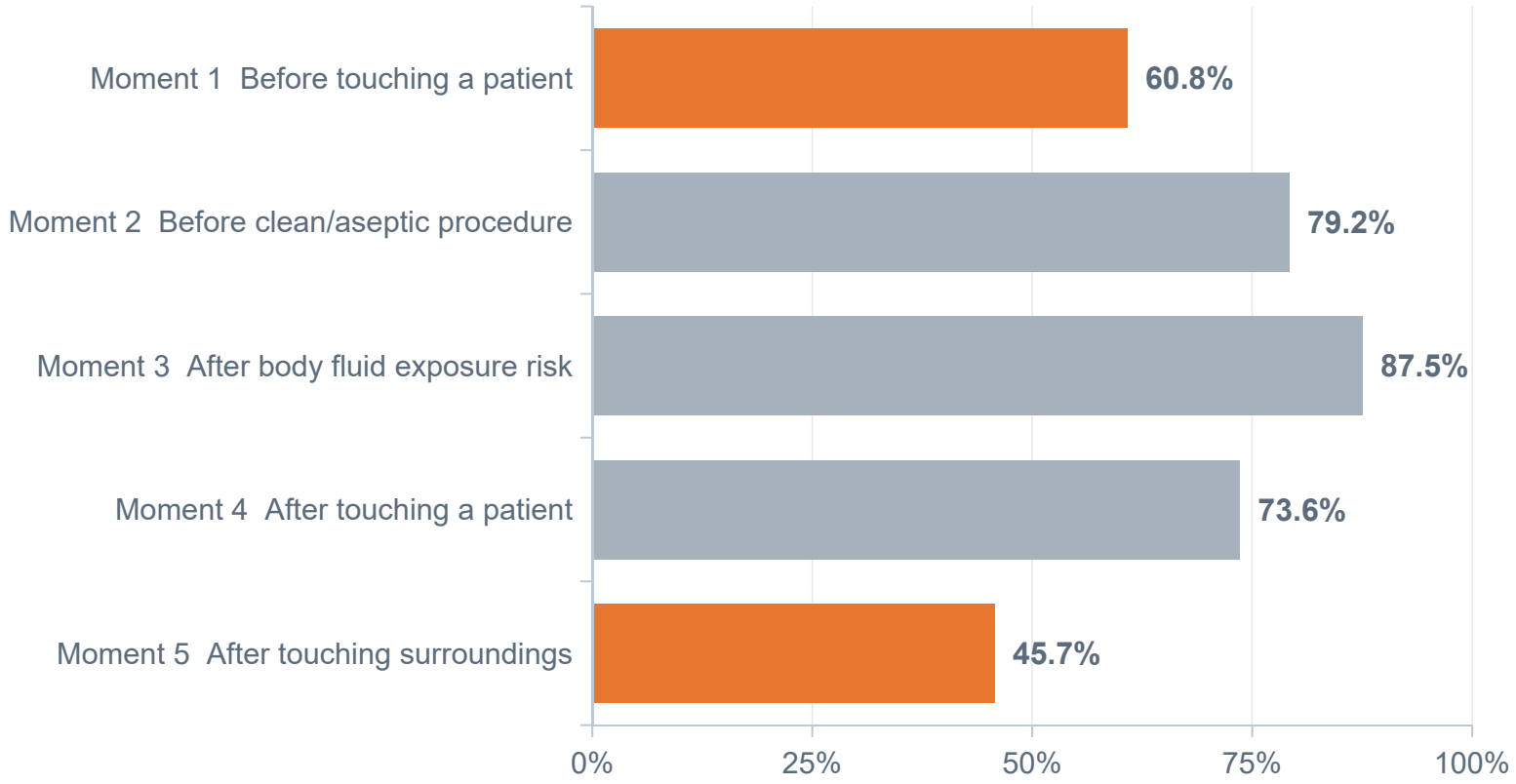
Recognise

missed hand hygiene opportunities in a real care sequence

Assessment: 4-question knowledge check (slides 10–11) plus an observed practical assessment on your ward.

WHY IT MATTERS

Our last audit: hands were cleaned at only 68% of opportunities



280 / 412

opportunities with hand hygiene performed

Most often missed
Moment 5 (45.7%) and Moment 1 (60.8%) — the moments without visible contamination

Our target: ≥90% at every moment

Fictional direct-observation audit, 6 adult wards, Q2 2026; 412 observed opportunities. Bars in orange: below 65%.

THE 5 MOMENTS

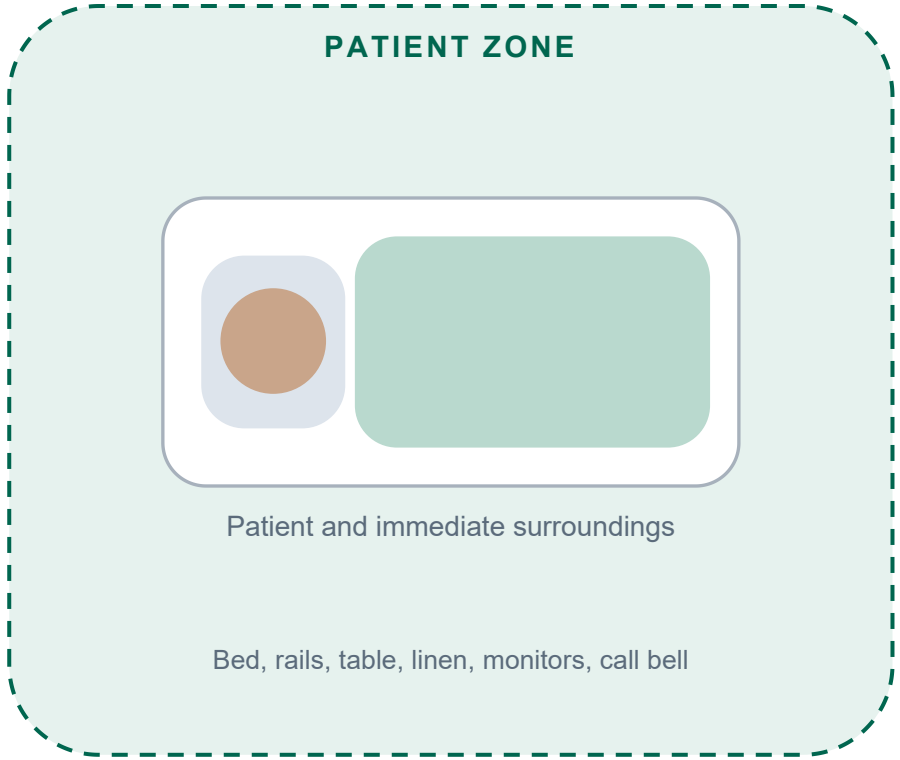
Five moments when you must clean your hands

1 Before touching a patient

e.g. shaking hands, helping to move, examination

2 Before a clean/aseptic procedure

e.g. cannula care, wound dressing, oral care



3 After body fluid exposure risk

e.g. emptying a catheter bag, after removing gloves

4 After touching a patient

when you leave the bedside after patient contact

5 After touching patient surroundings

even if you did not touch the patient

Moments 1–2 protect the **patient**

Moments 3–5 protect **you** and the environment

Clinical content based on WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2009).

RUB OR WASH?

Alcohol-based hand rub is the default — wash only when you need to

Alcohol-based hand rub

20–30 seconds

- For all 5 Moments when hands look clean
- Faster, more effective against most germs, kinder to skin
- Rub until completely dry before touching anything

Soap and water

40–60 seconds

- Hands visibly soiled or contaminated with body fluids
- Suspected or confirmed *C. difficile* or norovirus
- After using the toilet; dry thoroughly with paper towels

Gloves do not replace hand hygiene: clean your hands **before** putting gloves on and **after** taking them off

Clinical content based on WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2009). Alcohol is not reliably effective against *C. difficile* spores or norovirus.

TECHNIQUE

The hand rub technique: six steps, every surface, 20–30 seconds

0 — Apply a palmful
Cover all surfaces of both hands

1 — Palm to palm
Rub hands together

2 — Backs of hands
Right palm over left dorsum, fingers interlaced; swap

3 — Between fingers
Palm to palm, fingers interlaced

4 — Backs of fingers
Fingers interlocked, backs against opposite palm

5 — Thumbs
Rotational rubbing of each thumb clasped in the other palm

6 — Fingertips
Rub fingertips in the opposite palm, back and forth; swap

✓ — Let hands dry
Once dry, your hands are safe

0 s — **20–30 s: complete**

Clinical content based on WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2009). Steps 2–6 are performed on both hands.

BEFORE YOU START

Get ready: bare below the elbows, every clinical shift

✓ Do

- Short sleeves or sleeves rolled above the elbow
- Short, clean nails
- Cuts and grazes covered with a waterproof dressing
- Moisturise hands with ward-supplied cream after shifts

✕ Don’t

- Wristwatches, bracelets or rings with stones (a plain band is acceptable)
- Nail varnish, gel or artificial nails
- Long sleeves, cuffs or fitness trackers
- Using hand rub on hands that are still wet

Local uniform policy (fictional) aligned with common UK NHS ‘bare below the elbows’ practice.

CASE SCENARIO

Ward 5, 07:40 — follow Nurse Amy through 12 minutes of care

Mr Daniel Hughes, 78, is on day 2 after hip surgery, with a peripheral cannula and a urinary catheter. Amy cleans her hands at steps B and C only.

A 07:40

Shakes Mr Hughes's hand and checks his wristband

B 07:42

Cleans the cannula hub and flushes the cannula

C 07:46

Empties his catheter bag wearing gloves, then removes the gloves

D 07:49

Helps him sit up and plumps his pillows, then leaves the bedside

E 07:52

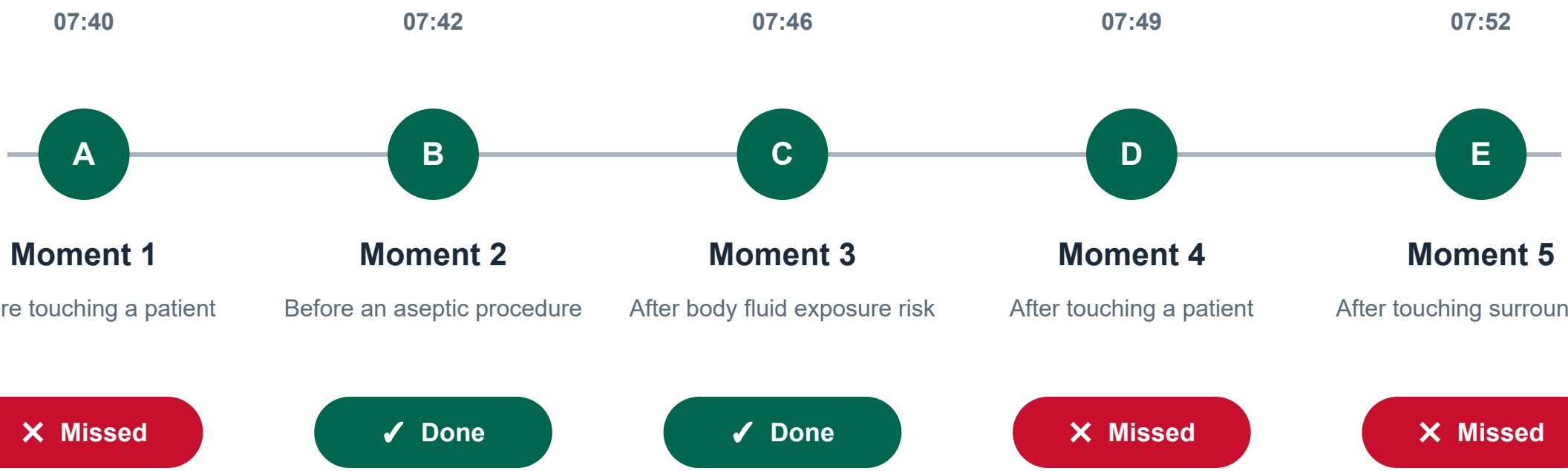
In the next bay, moves Mrs Patel's bedside table without touching her

Your turn (2 minutes): which of the 5 Moments apply at each step, and which did Amy miss?

Fictional patients and staff. Facilitator: pause here and ask the group before revealing the debrief.

CASE DEBRIEF

Amy missed three of five moments — all without visible contamination



Compliance in this sequence: 2 / 5 (40%). Amy cleaned her hands when the risk felt obvious (aseptic work, body fluids) but not before and after ordinary touch — the same pattern as our audit.

At step C, hand hygiene after removing gloves also counts as Moment 1 before she helps him at step D.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Check your understanding

Q1 **You finish helping a patient and are about to leave the bedside. Which moment applies?**

- A Moment 1
- B Moment 4
- C Moment 5

Q2 **Your hands are visibly soiled after helping a patient. What should you use?**

- A Alcohol-based hand rub
- B Soap and water
- C A new pair of gloves

Q3 **How long should a complete alcohol-based hand rub take?**

- A 5–10 seconds
- B 20–30 seconds
- C 2 minutes

Q4 **A patient has suspected *C. difficile*. Why is soap and water preferred?**

- A Alcohol does not reliably kill its spores
- B Hand rub irritates the patient’s skin
- C Soap and water is quicker

Facilitator: allow 3 minutes; use a show of hands or the ward polling app before revealing answers.

Answers and rationale

Q1 **You finish helping a patient and are about to leave the bedside. Which moment applies?**

- A Moment 1
- **B Moment 4 ✓**
- C Moment 5

Q2 **Your hands are visibly soiled after helping a patient. What should you use?**

- A Alcohol-based hand rub
- **B Soap and water ✓**
- C A new pair of gloves

Q3 **How long should a complete alcohol-based hand rub take?**

- A 5–10 seconds
- **B 20–30 seconds ✓**
- C 2 minutes

Q4 **A patient has suspected *C. difficile*. Why is soap and water preferred?**

- **A Alcohol does not reliably kill its spores ✓**
- B Hand rub irritates the patient's skin
- C Soap and water is quicker

Why: Q1 — Hands-on care has ended and you are leaving the patient zone. Q2 — Alcohol rub does not remove visible dirt or organic matter. Q3 — Shorter rubbing misses surfaces; longer adds nothing if hands are dry. Q4 — Spores resist alcohol; washing removes them mechanically.

SUMMARY

Five things to take back to your ward today

1. Clean your hands at all 5 Moments — especially before touch and after surroundings
2. Hand rub is the default; wash when soiled, after the toilet, or with *C. difficile* or norovirus
3. Rub every surface for 20–30 seconds and let hands dry
4. Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene
5. It is always OK to remind a colleague — and to be reminded

Next steps

Book your observed practical assessment with your ward IPC link practitioner

Monthly 5 Moments audits continue — results on the ward board

Questions: contact your ward IPC team.

Clinical content based on WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2009).