



Hand Hygiene on Passenger Conveyances

April 2, 2015

This guidance is based on current available scientific evidence and is subject to review and change as new information becomes available.

Overview

The following guidance is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Travelling Public Program to assist conveyance operators in determining appropriate hand hygiene measures to be used onboard a passenger conveyance. Adequate hand hygiene practices are especially important to reduce the risk of spreading communicable diseases.

Washing hands with soap and running warm potable water on a regular basis and whenever they become soiled is the preferred method of hand hygiene. However, potable water is not always available for hand washing in lavatories on passenger conveyances. When running potable water is not available, alternatives should be provided. This guidance focuses on procedures and products that are appropriate for adequate hand hygiene.

Recommendations

1. Washing hands with soap and water:

- Washing hands with soap and running warm water is best, because of the removal action of soap and water on transient microorganisms.
- Hands should be washed using soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

2. Hand hygiene when water is not available:

- If soap and water are not available, hand wipes impregnated with plain soap, antimicrobials or alcohol should be used to remove visible soil or organic material on your hands (e.g. after using the toilet).
- The use of hand wipes should be followed by an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with an alcohol - i.e., ethanol, isopropanol or n-propanol - concentration above 60% and up to 90%. Alcohols are the most rapidly active of all agents used in hand disinfection.
- Quaternary ammonia compound (QAC) products (e.g. benzalkonium chloride wipes) are not commonly used for hand hygiene. QACs work poorly against certain microorganisms. Based in this information, ABHR is recommended over QAC for use as a hand hygiene product.
- Use hand rubs according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water once a suitable hand wash facility is available.

3. Hand hygiene for food handlers when water is not available:

- Foods should not be prepared or assembled when running potable water is not available to wash hands.
- When food handling is limited (i.e. handling of pre-packaged foods), hand wipes followed by an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) may be used for hand hygiene.
- Use ABHR according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Wearing disposable gloves is not a substitute for adequate hand hygiene when handling food. Food handlers should be performing adequate hand hygiene before commencing the task, after each use of the washroom, when returning from a break, after snacking or eating, or after any other activity or instance where hands may become contaminated.

Additional Information

Operators may contact their regional Travelling Public Program office with any questions about public health within their facilities.

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