

## Abstracts #2

### AUTHOR

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### TITLE

APIC Guideline for Hand Washing and Hand Antisepsis in Health-Care Settings

### SOURCE

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

### ABSTRACT

APIC is the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology. Elaine Larson was selected to revise previously published guidelines because of her acknowledged expertise in the field. This guideline is supplemented by guidelines from AORN, the CDC, and the FDA.

Most experts acknowledge that a primary method of preventing spread of infection from individual to individual is by thorough hand washing. There are many studies that point to decreases in patient morbidity and mortality (nosocomial infections) directly attributable to hand washing. This guideline provides the following information:

- Skin flora of hands
- Characteristics of antimicrobial agents used on hands
- Hand washing and surgical scrub techniques
- Aspects of hand care and protection

### TERMINOLOGY

- Transient flora: microorganisms isolated from the skin but not demonstrated to be consistently present in the majority of persons. They are considered transient but are of concern because of ready transmission unless removed by mechanical and/or chemical hand washing. (Also known as contaminating flora)
- Resident flora: microorganisms persistently isolated from the skin of most persons. Considered permanent residents of the skin and not readily removed by mechanical hand washing. (Also known as colonizing flora)
- Plain or non-antimicrobial soap: detergent based cleansers in any form used for mechanical hand washing.
- Antimicrobial soap: a soap containing an ingredient with activity against skin flora used to augment mechanical hand washing with chemical hand washing
- Health care personnel handwash: a broad-spectrum, fast-acting, nonirritating, antimicrobial preparation designed for frequent use that reduces the number of transient flora on intact skin to a baseline level
- Surgical hand scrub: a broad-spectrum, fast-acting, persistent, and nonirritating preparation containing an antimicrobial ingredient designed to significantly reduce the number of microorganisms on intact skin

### The stages of selection for hand washing or surgical hand scrub are clearly defined

1. Determine what characteristics of a topical antimicrobial are desired (i.e. Absence of absorption across skin or mucous membranes, persistence, rapid reduction in flora, spectrum of activity),
2. Review and evaluate the evidence of safety and efficacy in reducing microbial counts. All antiseptic products should be tested as marketed. Compliance will also depend on subjective reactions to features such as packaging, odor, and harshness.
3. Consider personnel acceptance of the product and its' cost.

The active ingredients are then discussed as to: mode of action, spectrum of activity, safety and toxicity, rapidity of action, persistence, inactivation by organic matter, and available preparations. These include

- Alcohols
- Chlorhexidine gluconate - "One of the most important attributes of CHG is its persistence. It has strong affinity for the skin remaining active for at least six hours. Indeed, it probably has the best persistent effect of any agent currently available for hand washing."
- Hexachlorophene
- Iodine and iodophors
- Parachlorometaxylenol (PCMX)
- Triclosan



**Special areas of consideration are addressed**

- Nails, nail polish and artificial nails
- Jewelry
- Lotion

Discussed in brief are such topics as hand washing compliance, complications associated with frequent hand washing (dermatitis, hand irritation) and glove use (dermatitis, latex allergy, chemical reaction), and new technologies such as automatic flow sinks and dispensers.

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