

Resource 2

Hand hygiene principles

Hand hygiene is important as wet/sweaty skin changes the normal skin barrier and can lead to skin breakdown, sores, and infections.

Once a hand contracture is present, movements can be uncomfortable and difficult, therefore it is essential to maintain adequate hand hygiene and there are important principles to consider.

- Consider pain relief prior to hand hygiene and ensure the person has had 'breakthrough' pain relief within an appropriate amount of time prior to starting the hand hygiene.
- Your hands must be clean prior to engaging in hand hygiene and gloves should be considered as per protocol.
- Always involve the person and check that they are ready to start.
- Use a bowl of water to soak the hand, but only if the positioning of the hand enables this.
- Be aware the muscles in the arm/wrist may be tight, so use slow, gentle, but firm, movements to allow the hand to be in the best position to clean. Do **not** force the hand open. A light touch may also be necessary if the person has sensory issues.
- Be aware that touching a person's hand may cause it to become tighter. Talking to them and drawing their attention away from the hand may help.
- Ensure to clean the palm, between all the fingers, between the webspace of thumb and finger, and back and side of hand as tolerated.
- Check for any skin breakdown as you clean.
- Ensure soap is low pH (acidic) and do not use anything scented.
- The towel should have a lot of absorbency. Consider microfibre towels and or small baby flannels (which are absorbent).
- Keep their nails short to prevent future problems.
- Ideally, the hand must be dry following the wash.

If the hand is very tight or if after the above steps have been taken the patient is experiencing ongoing odour of the hand, refer to a healthcare professional for advice.

References

Mackay, S. 2020, *Hand Washing for People with Neurological Conditions*. Available at scottishneurological.org.uk

Alter, B. 2019. *How can I Prevent Hand Contracture After a Stroke?* Available at neofect.com



Scan me

@ westcarehomesupport@berkshire.nhs.uk

Service hours: Monday to Friday, 8am – 4pm

berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/chst