

## Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Hygiene in Ambulatory Care Settings

Hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene are well-known principles of patient and healthcare worker safety, and they are standard precautions for infection prevention and control (IPC) in healthcare organizations of all types and sizes, including ambulatory care settings.

Diligence in practicing appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene is critically important to preventing the spread of infectious diseases; however, lack of established hygiene protocols and lack of compliance with protocols are persistent issues in healthcare. Research suggests that rates of hand hygiene compliance among healthcare workers average around only 40–50 percent,<sup>1</sup> and the emergence of COVID-19 did not improve hand hygiene compliance.<sup>2</sup>

To address the safety and liability risks associated with poor hygiene practices, healthcare leaders and administrators should proactively work with providers and staff to review their current policies, identify gaps, and develop strategies to improve compliance. This checklist offers various considerations for hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene policies and protocols.<sup>3</sup>

	Yes	No
Does your healthcare organization have a written IPC plan that includes thorough hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene policies as well as worker accountabilities and expectations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do leaders, administrators, and other influential staff members make hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene organizational priorities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have organizational leaders considered developing programs that offer incentives, rewards, and/or recognition for compliance with hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene protocols?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Does your organization support a culture of safety that empowers healthcare workers, patients, and visitors to speak up about concerns or questions related to hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have organizational leaders worked with healthcare workers to identify potential barriers to hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene? Barriers are numerous and may include skin irritation, inadequate supplies, poorly located sinks, lack of awareness about infection prevention or proper hygiene techniques, low prioritization due to business or patient demands, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have healthcare workers been included in identifying solutions for hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene barriers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are healthcare workers educated about hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene protocols, the benefits of compliance, and the possible risks of noncompliance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do educational programs provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance on when to perform hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene?</li> <li>• Actual examples of infection control lapses that have resulted in adverse outcomes?</li> <li>• Hands-on tutorials that focus on appropriate hygiene techniques (e.g., in relation to hand sanitizing, handwashing, cough etiquette, and donning and doffing personal protective equipment)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Are training and education tailored to the specific characteristics of your organization and the specific roles of healthcare workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are healthcare workers evaluated for competency with hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene protocols following each training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do educational programs related to hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene occur at hire and at least annually thereafter or according to state and federal requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization’s IPC plan include disciplinary actions for workers who knowingly fail to follow established protocols? Are disciplinary actions consistently applied across the organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Does your organization offer visual cues and reminders to healthcare workers, patients, and visitors about practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (e.g., strategically placed hand sanitizer and tissues; email or portal reminders; social media posts; and signs, posters, and flyers about cough etiquette and handwashing)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have signs posted at entrances with instructions for patients and visitors who have symptoms of respiratory illnesses (e.g., calling in advance and wearing masks)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have environmental modifications to support hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene been implemented (e.g., locating glove dispensers next to sinks, establishing cough kiosks, ensuring adequate counter space to place equipment and supplies while performing hand hygiene, and providing touchless waste receptacles)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization stock adequate supplies to support compliance with hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene protocols (e.g., plain soap, antimicrobial soap, alcohol-based hand rub, tissues, and paper towels)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do procurement decisions related to hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene supplies take into consideration provider and staff preferences (e.g., in relation to skin sensitivity, fragrance, texture, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are supplies stored in convenient and easily accessible locations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization monitor for compliance with hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene protocols and provide a tiered corrective response when lapses are identified (e.g., gentle reminders, notice letters or write-ups about lax hygiene, and disciplinary actions as defined in the IPC plan)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Srejjic, E. (2015, December 6). Hand hygiene compliance monitoring provides benefits, challenges. *Infection Control Today*. Retrieved from [www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/hand-hygiene-compliance-monitoring-provides-benefits-challenges](http://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/hand-hygiene-compliance-monitoring-provides-benefits-challenges)

<sup>2</sup> Sandbøl, S. G., Glassou, E. N., Ellermann-Eriksen, S., & Haagerup, A. (2022). Hand hygiene compliance among healthcare workers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 50(7), 719–723. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2022.03.014>

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<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, January 30). *Hand hygiene guidance*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/guideline.html](http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/guideline.html); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, November 29 [last reviewed]). *CDC's core infection prevention and control practices for safe healthcare delivery in all settings*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/core-practices/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/core-practices/index.html); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2002, October 25). Guideline for hand hygiene in health-care settings: Recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee and the HICPAC/SHEA/APIC/IDSA Hand Hygiene Task Force. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 51 (No. RR-16). Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5116.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5116.pdf); Global Handwashing Partnership. (2017). *Fact sheet: Hand hygiene in healthcare facilities*. Retrieved from <https://globalhandwashing.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/GHP-Hygiene-in-HCFs-Fact-Sheet-Aug2017.pdf>; ECRI. (2020). *Hand hygiene. Ambulatory Care Risk, Quality, & Safety Guidance*. Retrieved from [www.ecri.org](http://www.ecri.org); ECRI. (2020). *Infection prevention & control. Ambulatory Care Risk, Quality, & Safety Guidance*. Retrieved from [www.ecri.org](http://www.ecri.org); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, January 8 [last reviewed]). *Hand hygiene in healthcare settings: Healthcare providers*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009, August 1 [last reviewed]). *Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette in healthcare settings*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, January 26 [last reviewed]). *Infection control basics: Standard precautions for all patient care*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/standard-precautions.html](http://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/standard-precautions.html); World Health Organization. (2009). *WHO guidelines on hand hygiene in health care: A summary*. Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/70126>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *Infection prevention and control assessment tool for outpatient settings*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/icar/outpatient.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/icar/outpatient.pdf)

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