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References:

Hand Hygiene, Nail Length and Artificial Nails, 1128

Document Type: Policy

PURPOSE:

To outline a facility-wide policy on hand hygiene, fingernails and the wearing of artificial fingernails (defined below)

BACKGROUND:

This policy is based on CDC guideline report: Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care setting, which states utilizing alcohol based hand cleansers containing between 50% and 70% alcohol is effective against gram negative and gram positive vegetative bacteria, including multi-drug resistant bacteria such as MRSA and VRE, Mycobacterium tuberculosis and a variety of fungi. They have poor activity against bacterial spores but most viruses are quite susceptible to alcohol in 50% to 70% concentrations. They have also been found to be well tolerated by staff, even with frequent use.

Also according to these same guidelines, there has been evidence implicating artificial nails and long natural nails in the transmission of infections by health care workers. These incidents were epidemiologically and microbiologically linked to health care workers who had fingernails with the same strain of microorganism that infected the patients.

DEFINITIONS:

Artificial fingernails are defined as any material applied to the nail for the purposes of strengthening or lengthening nails. These include but are not limited to: wraps, acrylics, tips, tapes, and gel coatings.

PROCEDURE:

INDICATIONS FOR HAND HYGIENE:

1. Hand Washing with soap and water :

Wash hands with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled or contaminated with patient's body fluids or excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin or if exposure to spore forming organisms is suspected or proven, and after using the bathroom. Steps should include:

1. Wet hands with water.
2. Apply enough soap to cover all hand/finger surfaces
3. Rub hands together vigorously for minimum of 15 seconds, spreading soap on all surfaces,
4. Dry thoroughly with a single use towel
5. Use towel to turn off faucet

2. **Hand Hygiene with Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizer:**

Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizer should be used if hands are not visibly soiled, for routinely decontaminating hands in clinical settings including:

1. before entering patient's room or exam area
2. before donning gloves
3. upon exit of patient room or exam area
4. if moving from a contaminated-body site to a clean-body site during patient care before donning sterile gloves when inserting a central intravascular catheter.
5. before inserting indwelling urinary catheters or other invasive devices that do not require a surgical procedure
6. after removing gloves

Step should include:

1. Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand and cover all surfaces.
2. Rub hands together while spreading sanitizer to all hand/finger surfaces until the solution has dried

Note: Alcohol hand cleaners should not be used when caring for a patient with Clostridium difficile infection.

ARTIFICIAL AND NATURAL FINGERNAILS

The following groups of employees **are not permitted** to wear artificial fingernails and are to maintain natural nails at a length no longer than $\leq \frac{1}{4}$ inch. Employee's manager may request staff to maintain a shorter length for patient safety needs. This group may wear nail polish if in good repair without cracks or chips. The group includes:

- Direct patient caregivers (nurses, DI, CNA's, therapy services, Lab personnel, Dietary, sitters, etc.)
- Food service workers who directly handle food

Other employees may wear artificial fingernails within the guidelines of the hospital personal appearance policy.

Other departments may have more stringent rules regarding nail polish and artificial nails. Employees are expected to follow their department's rules regarding nail length, nail polish and artificial nails. Employees visiting a department with more stringent guidelines will be expected to glove if their nails do not fall within the guidelines of that department.

CLEANING OF FINGERNAILS:

When using alcohol skin cleansers or when washing hands with soap and water, attention must be given to cleaning around the base of the fingernail, the cuticles, and the undersides of the nail tips.

REFERENCES:

HICPAC/SHEA/APIC/IDSA Hand Hygiene Task Force: Draft Guideline for Hand Hygiene In Health Care Settings: 2001

Effect of Hand Cleansing with Antimicrobial Soap or Alcohol-Based Gel on Microbial Colonization of Artificial Fingernails Worn by Healthcare Workers, Clinical Infectious Diseases; 2001:32, p 367

Pathogenic Organisms Associated With Artificial Fingernails Worn by Healthcare Workers: Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology, Vol. 21 No 8, p. 505

Association of Operating Room Nurses, Recommended Practices for Surgical Scrubs, 1999

Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings, 2007

CDC – MMWR – Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings 2002

Attachments:

No Attachments

Approval Signatures

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Applicability

Kadlec Regional Medical Center