

1. Purpose and scope

This policy is designed to minimise the risk of infection or cross infection and reduce the development of resistant pathogens and minimise risk of transmission through standard and transmission based precaution practices.

The key elements of the policy are to be adhered to across all programs and service sites and relate to all employees, contractors and consumers who provide or receive APMHA HealthCare (APMHA) contracted services.

2. Policy

2.1 Principles

APMHA aims to provide a safe and healthy work environment. The approach to managing the risk of cross infection is focused on the use of practices that meet standard and universal precautions. Effective infection control is central to providing high quality support for consumers and a safe working environment for staff and consumers.

Staff and consumers are most likely sources of infectious agents and are also the most common susceptible hosts. Other people visiting a premise may be at risk of both infection and transmission. Infection can easily spread from person to person and APMHA is committed to mitigating any risk of infection by implementing best practice infection control at an appropriate level for the organisation.

Cross infection may occur in a variety of ways including:

- a service user may be infected while receiving services,
- a health worker may be infected while carrying out their duties,
- employees who work or interact with clients may be infected, or
- a visitor may be infected while attending the office locations.

The main modes for transmission of infectious agents are contact (including blood borne), droplet and airborne. Transmission of infection may also occur through sources such as contaminated food, water, medications, devices or equipment.

Infection control is integral to consumer support, not an additional set of practices. Consumers' rights are respected at all times; they are involved in decision-making about their support, and they are sufficiently informed to be able to participate in reducing the risk of transmission of infectious agents.

2.2 Standard precautions

Formerly referred to as universal precautions, are standard precautions used during interaction with all patients and community members regardless of their known (or unknown) diagnosis or presumed infection status.

2.3 Hand washing

Good hand washing techniques (see Figure 1) are mandatory for all staff. Staff must wash their hands:

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- before and after contact with any patient,
- before and after home visits,
- before and after handling food,
- after handling any equipment that might have had body contact,
- before and after smoking,
- after blowing your nose,
- after going to the toilet, and
- when visibly soiled or perceived to be soiled.

3. Definitions

Infection: Infection requires three main elements — a source of the infectious agent, a mode of transmission and a susceptible host.

Infection control: Infection control is preventing the transmission of infectious organisms and managing infections if they occur.

Infectious agents: Infectious agents are biological agents that cause disease or illness to their hosts.

Contact transmission: Contact transmission usually involves transmission of an infectious agent by hand or via contact with blood or body substances. Contact may be direct or indirect.

Direct contact transmission: Direct contact transmission occurs when infectious agents are transferred from one person to another, for example, a consumer's blood entering a healthcare worker's body through an unprotected cut in the skin.

Indirect contact transmission: Indirect contact transmission involves the transfer of an infectious agent through a contaminated intermediate object or person, for example, an employee touches an infected body site on one consumer and does not perform hand hygiene before touching another consumer.

Standard precautions: Standard precautions are work practices which require everyone to assume that all blood and body substances are potential sources of infection, independent of perceived risk.

4. Responsibilities

APMHA Staff

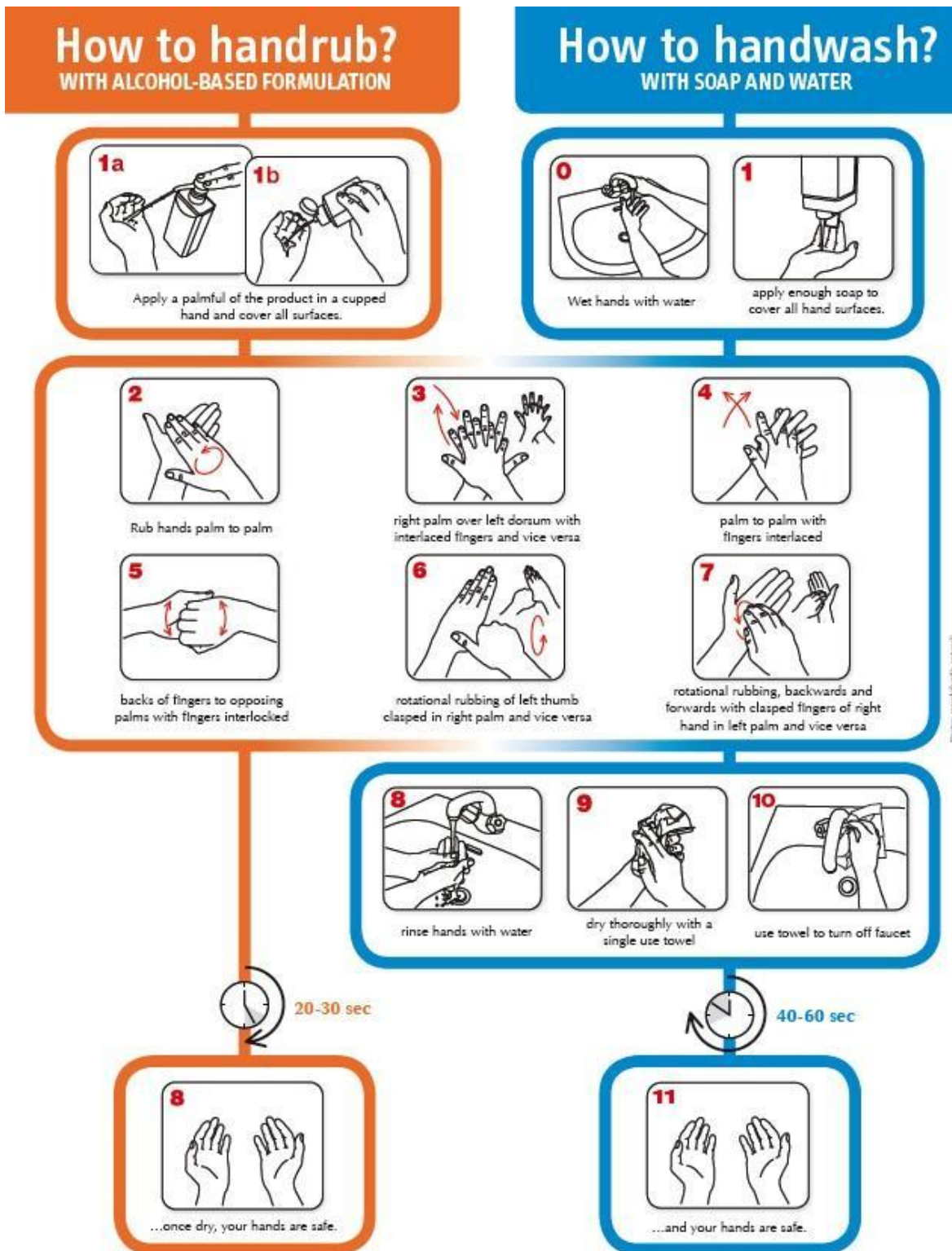
Employees and contractors must adhere to this policy.

General Managers

Program managers communicate this policy to the applicable APMHA staff.

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Figure 1: Hand washing techniques



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