



## hand hygiene

By Paul Alper

# The 6 Essential Elements of Hand Hygiene™: A Refined Strategic Framework for Healthcare Organizations

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About a year ago we introduced a strategic framework, The 6 Essential Elements of Hand Hygiene™, to help make hand hygiene second nature for all. Over the past year, we have refined as well as enhanced this approach and are excited to share the results this month.

Every patient, family member, visitor, staff member and volunteer who enters a healthcare facility, especially during this global pandemic, has the right to expect the highest standards for patient safety and quality. One of the most fundamental ways to achieve these standards is to create and value a culture in which hand hygiene is second nature for everyone.

Given that compliance rates, when measured accurately and reliably typically fall below 50 percent, a sound and evidence based strategic framework is essential to drive sustained improvement. Such an approach can provide a checklist of hand hygiene program elements that all work synergistically to ensure optimized hand hygiene behavior.

To that end, we have updated our framework. See the accompanying graphic and feel free to reproduce it for your infection prevention, epidemiology, patient safety and quality leadership team to use as a guide when thinking about your organization's strategic approach to hand hygiene.

They six essential elements are:

- 1 Advanced products
- 2 Reliable delivery systems
- 3 Point-of-care access
- 4 Effective learning systems
- 5 Safety culture
- 6 Actionable feedback

Here is guidance for how to optimize each element within your organization:

**Advanced Products:** Select a standardized product formulary that is supported by sound science and developed for high frequency hand hygiene; ensure that staff acceptance is widespread before implementing:

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Soaps (plain and/or antibacterial)
- Alcohol-based sanitizing wipes

**Reliable Delivery Systems:** Align placement of product dispensers with CMS, CDC, Joint Commission and WHO guidelines:

- Wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers: manual and/or touch-free inside and outside of patient rooms; soap dispensers at all sinks
- Consider lotion dispensers adjacent to sinks to best maintain skin health (lotions should be latex/nitrile plus CHG compatible)
- Touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers on stands for entry ways and other open areas; place easy-to-read signs on top to encourage use
- Personal carry size hand sanitizer bottles
- Tabletop pump bottles with soap and/or sanitizer as appropriate where access to wall mounted dispensers is limited
- Alcohol based sanitizing wipes in packets and canisters

**Point-of-Care Access:** Position hand hygiene products close to where hand hygiene moments occur:

- Outside and inside patient rooms
- At the bedside
- Throughout the operating room (for acute-care facilities and ambulatory surgery centers)
- At nurses' stations
- In treatment and examination rooms
- In food service, dining and food-preparation areas
- At information, reception and gift shop desks and counters
- In entryways and lobbies
- Provide personal carry size for when access to wall mounted dispensers is limited or inconvenient

**Effective Learning Systems:** Provide targeted education and training tools (based on behavioral science, human factors and high reliability organizational design) to make hand hygiene best practices second nature for all:

- Organizational leadership
- Staff and volunteers
- Patients, families and visitors

Ensure tools emphasize proper technique at every moment:

- Before and after touching the patient and/or their surroundings
  - Before and after patient care tasks (i.e., changing dressings, inserting new lines etc.)
  - Before and after personal activities such as eating, handling a cell phone or device and using the restroom
- Deploy facility wide reminders (rotate them regularly to keep the motivation fresh):
- Posters
  - Elevator wraps


- Tent cards in dining areas
- Patient and family informational brochures
- In-house TV hand hygiene reminders (think public service announcements)
- Notices on hospital website and/or apps

**Safety Culture:** Foster a safety culture that embraces:

- Leadership engagement and modeling of expected hand hygiene behaviors at all times
- Psychological safety - everyone feels safe to speak up when hand a hygiene opportunity is missed and greets such reminders with a "thank you!"
- A top-down accountability framework with a unit-based approach for barrier removal, action planning, goal setting and celebrating of gains

**Actionable Feedback:** Implement best practices for collecting and analyzing data and understand how to pinpoint where improvement is needed:

- Implement reliable performance measurement methods (e.g., electronic hand hygiene compliance monitoring)
- Provide timely, actionable feedback to all
- Maintain and distribute individual hand hygiene report cards to front line staff so they can be aware of and improve personal practice

We're excited for this update and think it will go a long way in helping healthcare organizations think about hand hygiene in a systematic way that contributes to highly reliable staff performance with sustained gains in compliance. As you think about organizational goals for 2022, consider incorporating the framework as a new patient safety and healthcare quality tool. 



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*Paul Alper, BA, led the launch of PURELL®, invented the first electronic hand hygiene monitoring system proven to reduce infections while improving behavior and eliminating costs and is now the vice president of patient safety innovation for Medline Industries, Inc. through an exclusive engagement with his consulting practice, Next Level Strategies, LLC.*

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