COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

SUBJECT:	HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS	PAGE	1
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POLICY No.:	325	EFFECTIVE DATE:	04/30/09
APPROVED BY:	Jonathan E. Fielding MD	SUPERSEDES:	DHS Policy No. 392.3

PURPOSE: To promote hand hygiene practices that reduce the transmission of pathogenic organisms to patients and personnel in health care settings.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all healthcare workers who provide direct patient care, have contact with patient care supplies, equipment or food, and laboratory and select pharmacy staff.

POLICY: It is the goal of the Department of Public Health to provide a safe and healthy environment for the treatment of patients. A major part of this goal is to promote hand hygiene and optimal hand conditions.

The following practices promote a safe environment for patients and health care workers and are to be adhered to by all health care personnel as noted in the Scope of this policy:

- Handwashing with water and plain or antimicrobial soap, or decontaminating hands with an antimicrobial agent is to be practiced as necessary and in the manner required by infection control guidelines and policies.

- Direct patient care staff and health care workers who have contact with patient supplies, equipment and food are prohibited from wearing artificial fingernails and long natural fingernails. Natural nails must be clean, with tips less than 1/4 inch beyond the tip of the finger. If fingernail polish is worn, it must be in good condition, free of chips, and preferably clear in color.

- Wearing rings with stones on fingers is discouraged. They can harbor bacteria and also tear gloves. Wearing bands may be allowed if they are cleaned along with the appropriate handwashing technique.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE: AREA HEALTH OFFICERS/DIRECTORS AND MANAGERS

1. Facility infection control managers and facility operations managers are responsible for developing internal operational procedures applicable to their facility describing proper hand hygiene protocols and infection control procedures, consistent with this policy, and CDC requirements.

2. Hand hygiene products including plain soap and/or antimicrobial soap and hand disinfecting agents (alcohol-based hand rub intended for hospital use) are to be provided in direct and indirect patient care areas. Store alcohol products in accordance with Los Angeles County regulations and National Fire Protection Agency recommendations.

3. The facility/program manager or designee is responsible for monitoring compliance with this hand hygiene policy.

4. Education regarding hand hygiene shall be provided to all employees upon implementation of this policy. This policy shall be included in the new employee orientation for health care workers as defined in the Scope of this policy.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE: EMPLOYEES

1. Employees are expected to adhere to facility policies and guidelines. Compliance with safety and infection control and prevention policies will be considered during the employee's overall performance evaluation.

2. An employee who does not comply with the fingernail provisions of this policy will be sent home without pay and not permitted to return to work until he or she has complied. Failure to comply with these requirements within 15 calendar days of being sent home may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

3. Employees are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have received a copy of this policy and agree to abide by its provisions.

DEFINITIONS:

Hand Hygiene
A general term used to describe handwashing and other methods to sanitize/decontaminate hands and proper hand care conditioning.

Artificial Fingernails
Any material applied to the fingernail for the purpose of strengthening or lengthening nails (e.g., tips, acrylic, porcelain, silk, jewelry, overlays, wraps, fillers, superglue, any appliqués other than those made of nail polish, nail-piercing jewelry of any kind, etc.)

REFERENCES: CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, October 25, 2002, Vol. 51, No. RR-16, "Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings"