

Effectiveness of alcohol-based hand gel



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Introduction

Q: How effective is alcohol-based hand gel on infection rates when appropriately used by nurses within a hospital setting? Hand hygiene is considered to be the most important and effective infection control measure in preventing the transmission of nosocomial infections (Fendler, et al., 2002). Recently many hospitals worldwide have introduced waterless alcohol-based hand gels as an alternative for hand hygiene rather than using soap and water and has proven to significantly decrease the overall nosocomial infection rates (Fendler, et al., 2002).

Results

Fendler, et al. (2002) study showed the overall infection rates significantly decreased by 30% over the 34-month period as compared with the control units (Fendler, et al., 2002). Hilburn et al. (2003) also found similar results with the comparison of the infection rates for the unit when the alcohol based hand gel (intervention) was used when compared with infection rates on the same unit (baseline); a 36.1% decrease in infection rates was demonstrated during the 10-month period when the alcohol based hand gel was used (Hilburn et al., 2003).

Implications

- Increased compliance levels, as the gel is quick and easy to use compared to hand washing with soap and water which is more time consuming.
- Less irritating to the skin compared to using soap and water.
- Cost saver to the DHB's and the patient as fewer complications related to infections, which can result in shorter stays in hospital.

Conclusion

Both studies clearly indicated that the use of alcohol based hand gel significantly decreased infection rates when compared with soap and water. The hand gel also provided an effective strategy in a hospital infection control programme (Hilburn et al., 2003).



References

- Hilburn, J., Hammond, B. S., Fendler, E. J., & Groziak, P. A. (2003). Use of alcohol hand sanitizer as an infection control strategy in an acute care facility. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 31(2), 109-116. doi: 10.1067/mic.2003.15
- Fendler, E., Ali, Y., Hammond, B., Lyons, M., Kelley, M., & Vowell, N., (2002). The impact of alcohol hand sanitizer use on infection rates in an extended care facility. *American Journal of Infection Control*, (30)4, 226-232. doi:10.1067/mic.202.120129

