

Emergency Department / Urgent Care

Guide to Conduct Hand Hygiene Reviews



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If you have questions about this guide or about hand hygiene reviews in general, you can email hand.hygiene@ahs.ca or contact your zone [Project Manager](#).



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In the Emergency Department (ED) or Urgent Care (UC) areas, sick and injured patients are taken care of on a priority basis. There will be moments of high acuity or high activity when patients in critical condition are being treated. During these times, it is important for the hand hygiene reviewer not to obstruct healthcare providers. Reviewers are reminded to not perform any observations during a crisis such as a code blue, if in doubt as to the appropriateness of completing the review at that time, consult with the ED/UC charge nurse / nursing care manager for an alternate time.

As on any unit, the reviewer should introduce them self to the main desk and charge nurse to avoid any conflicts and to make the staff aware of their presence.

ED/UC services may include medical care and stabilization of patients to prepare them for transport to a higher level of care or to services that may not be provided locally. There is a wide variety of staff that could be working in the ED/UC including but not limited to:

- nursing attendants
- healthcare aides
- nurses
- physicians (from various disciplines)
- emergency medical services staff (EMT)
- respiratory services staff
- diagnostic imaging staff
- environmental services staff

Observation Point: It is important to correctly identify the healthcare provider being observed. It is

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important to remember that police, and peace officers, as well as offsite security personnel should not be observed, as they are not AHS staff.

Observation Point: ABHR is sometimes more scarce in ED/UC due to patient risk of ingestion. Some staff will have small bottles of ABHR on their person or at a nursing desk as opposed to outside/inside individual rooms.

Observation Point: If hand hygiene is not performed due to the absence of hand hygiene facilities (ABHR, sinks), please note that within the observations using a comment.

Staff working in the ED/UC is expected to comply with the 4 Moments for Hand Hygiene. One notable difference that arises in emergency departments from other units is the fast rotation of patients, therefore a room/curtained space may be used by multiple patients during a single shift. Reviewers are reminded to be aware of staff accessing clean supplies and gloves, as these supplies can potentially be shared between many patients.

It is important for reviewers to be aware of the designation of healthcare environment vs. patient environment. Generally speaking, the patient bed, bedside table and chairs within a designated patient space are considered to be a part of that patient's environment. Healthcare environments include the nursing desk or any charting area for staff to work at. Curtains are commonly seen in ED/UC and are to be considered **healthcare environment**, meaning that hand hygiene should occur before moving from contacting curtains, to contacting the patient. Further elaboration on defining environments can be found in Section 3.5 Environments.

Emergency Department / Urgent Care - Scenario 1

The registered nurse (RN) leads the patient to the triage area in the ED/UC. The RN performs hand hygiene. The RN initiates the triage assessment by interviewing the patient and documenting on the patient chart; this chart is considered the bedside chart and is therefore, patient environment. The RN completes a set of vital signs including temperature, pulse, respirations and blood pressure, which is also documented on the patient chart. The RN removes the blood pressure cuff and leads the patient back to the waiting room, then performs hand hygiene before returning to the nursing station; Moment 4 (AFT-PAT/ENV).



HCP – Nurses (RN)

Moment 1 (wash/ABHR); Moment 4 (wash/ABHR)

Rationale:

- Moment 1 (BEF-PAT/ENV) is recorded as compliant when the RN performs hand hygiene before making contact with the patient's triage documents (patient environment).
- Moment 4 (AFT-PAT/ENV) is recorded as compliant when the RN performs hand hygiene after taking the patient back to the waiting room, before contact with the nursing station.

Observation Point: The blood pressure cuff and any other equipment used on the patient while taking vitals should be cleaned and disinfected using AHS approved products, between patients. Since the equipment is cleaned between each patient, the equipment can be viewed as clean until used on the next patient.