# HANDWASHING/HAND HYGIENE

## POLICY

In an effort to reduce the risk for infection in clients and staff members, thorough hand washing/hand antisepsis is required of all employees. River Valley Home Care, Inc. will establish guidelines for all staff and will provide education and direction on accepted practices.

## PURPOSE

To improve hand-hygiene practices of agency staff and to reduce transmission of pathogenic microorganisms to clients and personnel in the home care setting.

## SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. The hand hygiene procedure will be clearly outlined in the agency procedure manual.

2. Appropriate antiseptic cleanser may be used when appropriate and client situation facilities are not available.

3. Indications for hand washing and hand antisepsis:

   a. Before performing invasive procedures.

   b. Before caring for clients at high-risk for infection.

   c. When there is prolonged or intense contact with the client (bathing the client).

   d. Between tasks on the same client.

   e. Before touching a wound.

   f. After removing gloves.

   g. After touching objects that are potentially contaminated.

   h. After caring for a client who is infected with drug resistant organisms.

   i. When hands are visibly soiled.

   j. After using the toilet, blowing the nose or covering a sneeze.

   k. After assisting client to use the bathroom.

l. Before eating, drinking, handling food or serving food.

m. When hands are visibly dirty or contaminated with proteinaceous material or are visibly soiled with blood or other body fluids, wash hands with either a non-antimicrobial soap and water or an antimicrobial soap with water.

n. If hands are not visibly soiled, use an alcohol-based hand rub for routinely decontaminating hands in all other clinical situations. Alternatively, wash hands with antimicrobial soap and water in all clinical situations.

o. Decontaminate hands before having direct contact with clients, before donning sterile gloves to insert urinary catheters, vascular catheters or other invasive devices that do not require surgical procedures.

p. Decontaminate hands after contact with client's intact skin, after contact with body fluids, excretions, non intact skin and wound dressings.

q. Decontaminate hands after contact with inanimate objects including equipment in the immediate vicinity of the client.

r. Decontaminate hands after removing gloves.

4. WASH HANDS with soap and water before eating and after using a restroom.

5. Antimicrobial impregnated wipes (towelettes) may be used as an alternative to washing hands with non-antimicrobial soap and water. They are not as effective as alcohol based hand rubs or washing hands with antimicrobial soap and water.

6. Health care personnel should avoid wearing artificial nails and keep natural nails less than one quarter of an inch long if they care for clients at high risk of acquiring infections.

# HAND HYGIENE TECHNIQUE

1. When decontaminating hands with an alcohol based hand rub, apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until hands are dry. (Follow manufacturers recommendations regarding volume of product to use.)

2. When washing hands with soap and water, wet hands first with water, apply an amount of product recommended by manufacturer to hands and rub hands together vigorously for at least fifteen (15) seconds, covering all surfaces of hand and fingers.

a. Rinse hands with water and dry thoroughly with a disposable towel. (Avoid using hot water, because repeated exposure to hot water may increase the risk of dermatitis.)

      b.  Encourage the use of hand lotions or creams to minimize the occurrence of irritant contact dermatitis associated with hand antisepsis or handwashing.

3.  Multiple use cloth towels are not recommended for use in health care settings.