Eyes are susceptible to infection by many organisms, including gram-negative bacilli, adenoviruses, the herpes simplex virus, and fungi. Infection puts eyes at higher risk of complications after cataract surgery. Hand washing is the most important, fundamental principle of infection control. It must be strongly encouraged and practised by all disciplines in the health care setting.

Hand washing is required in the following situations:

- before any aseptic procedure
- before and after handling any patient
- after handling any soiled item
- before and after handling food
- whenever hands are, or even feel, soiled
- when entering and leaving a clinical area
- after using the toilet or assisting a patient in the toilet
- before and after handling food

Many health care workers are unaware of the need for frequent hand washing and that a certain technique is required for hand washing to be effective.

Written instructions for hand washing, as given below, should be displayed in all clinical areas.

Wet hands with clean, preferably running, water
Apply soap or cleanser
Rub palm to palm
Rub back of left hand over right palm and vice versa
Rub back of right hand over left palm
Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced
Rub backs of fingers on opposing palms with fingers interlocked
Rub around right thumb with left palm and vice versa
Rub palm of right hand with fingers of right hand and vice versa
Rinse off soap with clean, preferably running, water, and dry well.

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