

CLEAN HANDS PROTECT LIVES. Frequently Asked Questions

What is the goal of this campaign?

“Clean Hands Protect Lives” is a patient engagement campaign centred on the importance of effective hand hygiene. Hand hygiene involves everyone in the hospital, including patients. The goal of this campaign is to educate and empower patients about personal hand hygiene while managing their expectations about when health care providers should clean their hands.

Who is leading this initiative?

“Clean Hands Protect Lives” is designed and managed by the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) and funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The OHA advocates on behalf of its members for a sustainable health care system that meets patient care needs; provides leadership through health system research and development, as well as education that serves to help shape the future of health care; and provides services to members that support integration and contribute to the overall quality and efficiency of the health care system.

Why is the Ontario Hospital Association launching this campaign?

Patient safety has always been a top priority for OHA. Through initiatives such as the “*Your Health Care - Be Involved*” campaign and participation in the MOHLTC’s “*Just Clean Your Hands*” education program, for example, the OHA provides valuable resources for hospitals to improve and sustain patient safety efforts within their organizations.

The OHA is building on the success of the “*Your Health Care - Be Involved*” and the MOHLTC’s “*Just Clean Your Hands*” education program, and working with the MOHLTC to launch “Clean Hands Protect Lives,” a complementary patient education program on the importance of hand hygiene.



What is the association between “Clean Hands Protect Lives” and “Your Health Care - Be Involved?”

“Clean Hands Protect Lives” has been developed to complement the “Your Health Care - Be Involved” campaign. Although hand hygiene is the main focus of “Clean Hands Protect Lives,” the overriding theme of patient empowerment and education prevails. Organizations are encouraged to use the “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign materials and messages together with the existing campaign materials from “Your Health Care - Be Involved” to educate staff and patients about the importance of hand hygiene.

Can our organization continue to display and use the “Your Health Care - Be Involved” campaign materials?

Yes. The “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign was designed to complement the original “Your Health Care - Be Involved” campaign launched in 2005 and re-launched in October 2007. Hospitals are encouraged to continue displaying the posters and distributing the pamphlets alongside the “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign materials.

What is the association between “Clean Hands Protect Lives” and the “Just Clean Your Hands” program?

“Just Clean Your Hands” is a program developed by the MOHLTC. It is a multifaceted program targeted at health care providers that educates them about when and how to clean their hands, as well as providing tools and materials to encourage effective hand cleaning practices and monitor compliance. Since patients are partners in effective hand hygiene, “Clean Hands Protect Lives” has been developed to provide patients with critical information about effective hand hygiene. Therefore, the messaging and materials from “Just Clean Your Hands” and “Clean Hands Protect Lives” support one another.

Was this campaign developed in response to the recent outbreaks of *C. difficile* in some Ontario hospitals?

“Clean Hands Protect Lives” was designed to complement the OHA’s successful “Your Health Care - Be Involved” campaign, which was launched in September 2005. While the “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign was not developed to respond directly to the issue of *C. difficile* in some Ontario hospitals, it will certainly help to provide hospitals with information and tools to educate and empower patients about personal hand hygiene, and about the importance of hand hygiene in preventing the spread of health care associated infections.



Will the “Clean Hands Protect Lives” program elements help to reduce the number of *C. difficile* cases in hospitals?

Effective hand hygiene practices in hospitals play a key role in improving patient and provider safety, and in preventing the spread of health care-associated infections. The “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign message and the information provided in the pamphlet and on the posters will certainly go a long way in encouraging patients to be more aware of their hand hygiene practices, and educating them about when health care providers should clean their hands.

With *C. difficile* such a hot topic in the media right now, will hospitals receive more funding to implement programs like “Clean Hands Protect Lives”, and hire additional infection control staff to help with the new public reporting requirements?

We understand that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, under Dr. Michael Baker's leadership, will be looking at the financial impact of public reporting on hospitals in the time ahead. The Ontario Hospital Association continues to urge the government to provide investment in patient safety infrastructure to carry out this work, as well as specific investment in infection control to assist in compliance with best practice.

How long will the campaign run?

The campaign is designed for longevity. The materials have been developed so that hospitals can continue to use and apply the messaging on an ongoing basis. There is no end-date for this campaign.

Will this information reduce the number of hospital acquired infections?

Hand hygiene is an important practice for health care providers and patients and has a significant impact on reducing the spread of infections in hospitals. Hand hygiene is a different way of thinking about safety and patient care and involves everyone in the hospital, including patients and health care providers. The main campaign message and the information contained in the pamphlet will encourage patients to be more involved in effective hand hygiene practices, educate them about when health care providers should clean their hands.



Is participation in the campaign mandatory?

While participation in the campaign is not mandatory, the OHA encourages all hospitals to demonstrate their commitment to patient safety and infection control by supporting the program. As the launch of “Clean Hands Protect Lives” coincides with Infection Control week, this is a great opportunity for hospitals to highlight their involvement in patient safety and hand hygiene.

In addition, as part of Accreditation Canada’s patient safety goals and required organizational practices, organizations are required to provide patients with information on the role they can play in their health care. The “Clean Hands Protect Lives” campaign is a great way for health care providers to encourage patients and their families to become more informed and involved in good hand hygiene.

How will “Clean Hands Protect Lives” reach its audience?

“Clean Hands Protect Lives” is a province-wide campaign. Every hospital in Ontario will receive campaign materials, including posters, pamphlets and “How to Clean” pocket cards.

To ensure that the campaign message is accessible to patients across Ontario, all materials will be translated into fourteen languages and will be available on the OHA website at www.oha.com/patientsafetytips

How can we order more materials?

All hospitals will receive a starter kit shipping box consisting of a pre-determined number of campaign materials including posters, pamphlets and “How to Clean” pocket cards. Electronic copies of all materials will be available for download on the OHA website at www.oha.com/patientsafetytips so that hospitals may easily reproduce the material as needed for use in their facilities.