



THOMAS L. GARTHWAITE, M.D.  
Director and Chief Medical Officer

FRED LEAF  
Chief Operating Officer

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
313 N. Figueroa, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 240-8101

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Gloria Molina  
First District

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke  
Second District

Zev Yaroslavsky  
Third District

Don Knabe  
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich  
Fifth District

December 15, 2003

TO: Hospital CEO's  
Division Heads  
Program Managers  
Area Administrators

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.

SUBJECT: **HAND HYGIENE POLICY: DHS POLICY NO. 392.3, "HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS - JCAHO REQUIREMENTS"**

Effective January 1, 2004, the Department of Health Services (DHS) will implement the attached Policy No. 392.3, "Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings - JCAHO Requirements."

This policy was approved by the Los Angeles County DHS Infection Control Practitioners and is based on guidelines published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding hand hygiene. These guidelines include recommendations that prohibit certain healthcare workers from wearing long and artificial fingernails.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has adopted these guidelines for its 2004 National Patient Safety Goals. Therefore, we are required to develop policies and procedures for implementation of these guidelines.

Employees who provide direct patient care, have contact with patient supplies, equipment or food, and laboratory and select pharmacy staff will be required to comply with this policy by January 31, 2004. Employees who have not complied by that date will be sent home without pay, and given up to an additional 15 calendar days to comply. Disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, will be initiated upon employees who do not comply within those 15 days.

I expect you, as leaders of this organization, to promote, monitor and provide educational orientation for implementation of this policy. The CDC website contains tools that can be used to promote hand hygiene and assist you in monitoring your hand hygiene program. Each facility administration is responsible for developing internal procedures consistent with this policy.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Susan Moser, DHS Human Resources, Employee Relations, Technical Assistance and Policy Division, (323) 869-7112.

TLG:lc  
v:/ar/handwash memo2

Attachment

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**



**SUBJECT: HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS-JCAHO REQUIREMENTS**  
**POLICY NO: 392.3**

---

**PURPOSE:** To promote hand hygiene practices that reduce the transmission of pathogenic organisms to patients and personnel in health care settings.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all healthcare workers who provide direct patient care, have contact with patient care supplies, equipment or food, and laboratory and select pharmacy staff.

**POLICY:** It is the goal of the Department of Health Services to provide a safe and healthy environment for the treatment of patients. A major part of this goal is to promote hand hygiene and optimal hand conditions.

Beginning January 1, 2004, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) accreditation will require hospitals and health care facilities to comply with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hand hygiene guidelines

The following practices promote a safe environment for patients and health care workers and are to be adhered to by all health care personnel as noted in the Scope of this policy:

- Handwashing with water and plain or antimicrobial soap, or decontaminating hands with an antimicrobial agent is to be practiced as necessary and in the manner required by infection control guidelines and policies.
- Direct patient care staff and health care workers who have contact with patient supplies, equipment and food are prohibited from wearing artificial fingernails and long natural fingernails. Natural nails must be clean, with tips less than 1/4 inch beyond the tip of the finger. If fingernail polish is worn, it must be in good condition, free of chips, and preferably clear in color.
- Wearing rings with stones on fingers is discouraged. They can harbor bacteria and also tear gloves. Wearing bands may be allowed if they are cleaned along with the appropriate handwashing technique.

---

**APPROVED BY:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Deak', written over a horizontal line.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 1, 2004

**SUPERSEDES:**

**PAGE 1 OF 3**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

**SUBJECT: HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS – JCAHO REQUIREMENTS**

**POLICY NO.: 392.3**

---

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE: CEO's AND MANAGERS**

1. Hospital Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) and health facility managers shall develop internal operational procedures applicable to their facility describing proper hand hygiene protocols and infection control procedures, consistent with this policy, and CDC and JCAHO requirements.
2. Hand hygiene products including plain soap and/or antimicrobial soap and hand disinfecting agents (alcohol-based hand rub intended for hospital use) are to be provided in direct and indirect patient care areas. Store alcohol products in accordance with Los Angeles County regulations and National Fire Protection Agency recommendations.
3. The Department Manager or designee is responsible for monitoring compliance with this hand hygiene policy.
4. Education regarding hand hygiene shall be provided to all employees upon implementation of this policy. This policy shall be included in the new employee orientation for health care workers as defined in the Scope of this policy.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE: EMPLOYEES**

1. Employees are expected to adhere to hospital policies and guidelines. Compliance with safety and infection control and prevention policies will be considered during the employee's overall performance evaluation.
2. An employee who does not comply with the fingernail provisions of this policy will be sent home without pay and not permitted to return to work until he or she has complied. Failure to comply with these requirements within 15 calendar days of being sent home may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.
3. Employees are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have received a copy of this policy and agree to abide by its provisions.

---

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 1, 2004

**SUPERSEDES:**

**PAGE 2 OF 3**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

**SUBJECT: HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS – JCAHO REQUIREMENTS  
POLICY NO.: 392.3**

---

**DEFINITIONS: Hand Hygiene**

A general term used to describe handwashing and other methods to sanitize/decontaminate hands and proper hand care conditioning.

**Artificial Fingernails**

Any material applied to the fingernail for the purpose of strengthening or lengthening nails (e.g., tips, acrylic, porcelain, silk, jewelry, overlays, wraps, fillers, superglue, any appliques other than those made of nail polish, nail-piercing jewelry of any kind, etc.)

**REFERENCES: CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, October 25, 2002, Vol. 51, No. RR-16,  
"Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings"**

JCAHO National Patient Safety Goals 2004

---

**EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2004**

**SUPERSEDES:**

**PAGE 3 OF 3**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

DHS Policy No. 392.3, "Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings – JCAHO Requirements"

---

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Department of Health Services' Policy No. 392.3, "Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings – JCAHO Requirements" and agree to abide by the provisions of this policy. If I fail to comply with this policy, I will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

---

Employee Name (Please Print)

---

Payroll Title

---

Employee Signature

---

Employee Number

---

Date

Copy – Personnel Folder

---

10/24/03

**A DHS Patient Safety Goal:**  
**No artificial fingernails** for any  
health care worker with direct patient  
care contact.



*Eliminate Bacteria!*

**Natural nail tips < 1/4" long;  
polish is okay if not chipped.**

*\*Policy goes into effect 1/1/04. Ask your supervisor for details!*