

## Hospital Performance

# Hand hygiene data release

## Explanatory notes

10 December 2015



The National Health Performance Authority has today published updated information on hand hygiene rates for Audit Period 1, ending March 2015 and Audit Period 2, ending June 2015.

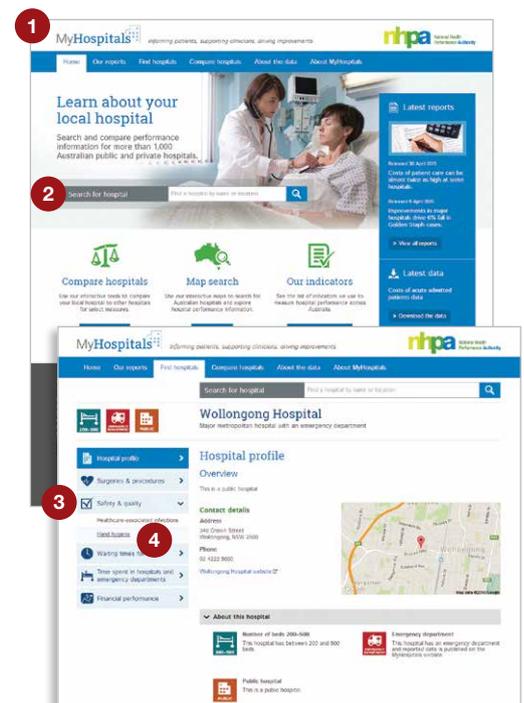
'Hand hygiene' is a measure of the extent to which health care workers clean or disinfect their hands before and while caring for patients, either by washing in soap and water or by using other products such as disinfectant gels. Effective hand hygiene practices play an important role in preventing the spread of disease-causing bacteria, which can cause dangerous or even life-threatening infections particularly in more vulnerable patients.

Rates of effective hand hygiene are published by the National Health Performance Authority (the Authority) to support greater transparency and quality improvement around this practice, given its link to patient safety. There is a national benchmark for health care workers to clean their hands correctly in at least 70.0% of observed opportunities called 'moments'.

Due to the way in which hand hygiene data is collected, this information is not deemed to be comparable between hospitals. As it is not practical to count every single instance when hand-washing would be expected, sampling techniques are used instead. However, while standard practices have been adopted regarding what hospitals measure when they gather hand hygiene information, the process for sampling has not been standardised. This means we cannot be sure that comparing hand hygiene rates for different hospitals results in a like-with-like comparison. Therefore, for this release the Authority has not prepared interactive comparative tools or results tables that allow hospital hand hygiene rates to be viewed side-by-side.

Although not nationally comparable, hand hygiene information is still useful to help drive quality improvement efforts within hospitals. The Authority encourages those interested to view results for individual hospitals. This can be done by taking the following steps:

- 1 Go to [www.myhospitals.gov.au](http://www.myhospitals.gov.au)
- 2 Navigate to the pages specific to any hospital (which can be done by entering a hospital name or postcode into the 'Find your local hospitals' search field at the middle left of the home page)
- 3 Select the 'Safety and quality' tab on the left-hand-side of the menu
- 4 Click the 'hand hygiene' link.  
Note: The link is only available if data are reported for the selected hospital.





## Background information

### About Hand Hygiene Audit information

Hand hygiene data are provided by state and territory health authorities for public hospitals and by some private hospitals. The data are derived from audits of hand hygiene ‘moments’ that are conducted up to three times per year under the National Hand Hygiene Initiative. Guidance on these audits is provided by Hand Hygiene Australia (HHA), a body established by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. More information is available from HHA at [www.hha.org.au](http://www.hha.org.au)

### What is a ‘hand hygiene moment’?

Trained auditors observe staff at times when they are expected to perform hand hygiene. These times are referred to as ‘moments’. Auditors must have completed HHA auditor training and are required to observe a specified number of hand hygiene moments each Audit Period.

There are five types of these ‘moments’ based on the World Health Organization Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care:

- Before touching a patient
- Before a procedure
- After a procedure or body fluid exposure
- After touching a patient
- After touching a patient’s surroundings.

If hand washing or disinfecting is conducted **AND** done correctly, then this is recorded as a correct ‘moment’ of hand hygiene.

### What period is the data from?

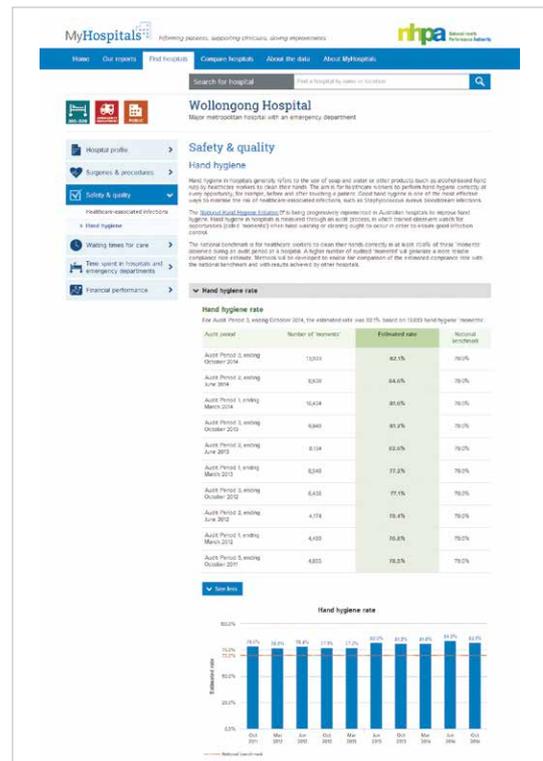
Hand hygiene data are collected for three Audit Periods (of uneven length) each year. Data can be collected at any time across the 3–5 month Audit Period. This release adds data for:

- Audit Period 1, ending March 2015 for 474 public and 164 private hospitals
- Audit Period 2, ending June 2015 for 467 public and 153 private hospitals.

### How are the data presented?

The MyHospitals website presents the following information for hospitals who report on hand hygiene:

- The rate of hand washing or disinfecting expressed as a percentage (this is an estimate as it is based on a sample of ‘moments’, not as a result of observing every moment)
- The number of observed hand hygiene ‘moments’
- A bar graph showing how the rate compares to the national benchmark of 70.0%.





## How is the estimated rate calculated?

The estimated hand hygiene rate for a hospital is expressed as the percentage of 'moments' in which hand hygiene practices are correctly performed. It is calculated by dividing the number of observed hand hygiene 'moments' during the Audit Period where proper hand hygiene was practised by the total number of observed hand hygiene 'moments' in the same Audit Period, then multiplied by 100 to make a percentage (reported to one decimal place) for example,  $180/210 \times 100 = 85.7\%$ .

## More information on the measure:

1. Ward sampling options for every audit include:
  - Minimum of one Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and
  - Minimum number of High Risk Wards.

Hospitals without an ICU or High Risk Wards are required to audit as per Option A or B:

- Option A – Other wards to be rotated every Audit Period\*
- Option B – All other wards audited every Audit Period\*.

\*Number of moments observed dependent on hospital size.

The method used by each hospital can vary. This affects the comparability of data; for example, New South Wales and Victoria mostly use options A and B, Queensland uses B, etc.

2. Data may not appear on the MyHospitals website for a number of reasons, including:
  - The hospital (public or private) has fewer than 25 occupied acute inpatient beds. Participation is voluntary for small hospitals in some jurisdictions
  - The hospital primarily provides mental health or rehabilitation care. Participation is voluntary for such hospitals
  - The hospital is a private hospital. Participation is voluntary for all private hospitals, including day hospitals
  - The hospital had fewer than 100 observed 'moments' for the period. Data are not reported for all of these hospitals
  - Data were not collected for this hospital for the Audit Period
  - The data have otherwise not been provided to the MyHospitals website
  - Day hospitals with fewer than 2,000 procedures per year.

In addition, no data are reported for hospitals that have fewer than 100 observed hand hygiene 'moments'.

3. The method 'samples' moments and is therefore an estimate and necessary moments are based on sample size calculations. The MyHospitals website does not display confidence intervals around this measure. Also, staff are often aware they are being audited so may moderate their hand hygiene behaviour.