

Hospital Performance

Hand hygiene data release

Explanatory notes

31 January 2014



The National Health Performance Authority has today published updated information on hand hygiene rates for more than 430 public and private hospitals.

‘Hand hygiene’ is a measure of the extent to which doctors and nurses clean their hands between patients, either by washing in soap and water or by using other products such as disinfectant gels. Effective hand hygiene practices are acknowledged to play an important role in preventing the spread of disease-causing bacteria, which particularly in some more vulnerable patients can cause dangerous or even life-threatening infections.

Rates of effective hand hygiene are being published by the Performance Authority to support greater transparency and quality improvement around this practice, given its link to patient safety.

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 or cleaning 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 Performance 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 Performance Authority encourages those interested to view results for individual hospitals. This can be done by taking the following steps:

- 1 Go to the www.myhospitals.gov.au website
- 2 Navigate to the pages specific to any hospital (which can be done by entering a hospital name, place or postcode into the “Find your local hospitals” search field at the top right of the home page)
- 3 Select the “Safety and quality” tab
- 4 Click the “Most recently reported rate” link for hand hygiene.





Background information

About Hand Hygiene Audit information

Hand hygiene data are provided by state and territory health authorities for public hospitals and by individual 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

What is a ‘hand hygiene moment’?

Trained auditors, typically other hospital staff, observe staff at times when they are expected to wash or disinfect their hands. 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 based on the number of occupied acute beds in a hospital (or the number of procedures performed annually in a private day hospital).

There are five types of these ‘moments’ and this list is based on the World Health Organization Guidelines on Hand Hygiene:

- Before touching a patient
- Before a procedure
- After a procedure or body fluid exposure risk
- 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 successful moment of hand hygiene.

What period is the data from?

Hand hygiene data is collected for three audit periods (of uneven length) each year. The auditing can be spaced out across the 3–5 month audit period or can all occur in a single week. This release adds data for Audit period 3, 2013 so therefore covers the July to October 2013 period.

How is the data presented?

MyHospitals presents the following information for hospitals reporting on hand hygiene:

- The rate of hand washing or disinfecting (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 dial showing how the rate compares to the national benchmark of 70%.

The screenshot shows the MyHospitals website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Publications', 'Compare hospitals', 'About the data', 'Contact MyHospitals', and 'Glossary'. A search bar is present with the text 'Enter a hospital, place or postcode'. Below this, the profile for 'John Hunter Hospital' is displayed, including its address and phone number. A section titled 'Hand hygiene rate' provides a summary: 'Hand hygiene in hospitals generally refers to the use of soap and water or a surface antimicrobial agent... The national benchmark for hand hygiene is 70%.' It also states that for audit period 3, ending October 2013, the estimated rate was 86.2% based on 5,878 hand hygiene moments, which is higher than the national benchmark. A table below compares the estimated rate of hand hygiene against the national benchmark for various audit periods from 2011 to 2013. A progress indicator shows the current rate (86.2%) is significantly above the 70% benchmark.

Audit period	Estimated rate	Number of 'moments'
Audit period 3, ending October 2013	86.2%	5,878
Audit period 2, ending June 2013	84.3%	5,547
Audit period 1, ending March 2013	83.4%	5,805
Audit period 3, ending October 2012	83.0%	6,345
Audit period 2, ending June 2012	83.4%	4,997
Audit period 1, ending March 2012	81.6%	5,687
Audit period 3, ending October 2011	83.3%	3,324



How is the rate calculated?

The estimated hand hygiene rate for a hospital is the percentage of how often hand hygiene is 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 fraction (reported to one decimal place).

Other background:

1. There are three acceptable ward sampling strategies that can be used:
 - Option A – high risk wards with rotation of other wards
 - Option B – high risk wards with auditing of all other wards
 - Option C – intensive care unit with auditing of all other wards.

The method used by each hospital can vary although the same method(s) tend to be used by hospitals within each state or territory. This affects the comparability of data, e.g. New South Wales mostly uses options A and B, Victoria uses A, Queensland uses B, South Australia uses a modified version of C, etc.

2. Data may not appear on MyHospitals for a number of reasons, including:
 - The hospital has fewer than 25 occupied acute care beds. Participation is voluntary for small hospitals
 - 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 MyHospitals.

3. There is some suppression applied to data, for example, the comparison to the national benchmark is not shown for:
 - Hospitals with fewer than 25 occupied acute care beds
 - Day hospitals with fewer than 2,000 procedures per year
 - Private hospitals with fewer than 25 occupied acute care beds
 - Hospitals where the number of observed hand hygiene 'moments' was fewer than 100.

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

4. Remember that 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 of being audited so can moderate their behaviour.
5. For this audit period, more than 350 public hospitals and more than 70 private hospitals updated their hand hygiene information.