

## The importance of choosing the best quality hand sanitisers

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Approximately 70% of health care workers and 50% of surgical teams do not routinely practice hand hygiene according to the WHO and further studies have shown that a well-established and practised hand hygiene routine can drive reductions in hospital acquired infections. It is on the back of this sort of information that the WHO annually runs its World Hand Hygiene Day with the Save Lives, Clean Your Hands campaign, this year on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Supported by over 20,000 healthcare establishments across the world the day the campaign aims to highlight the importance of hand hygiene in health care, by 'bringing people together' in support of hand hygiene improvement globally.

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-hand-hygiene-day>

The last two years though have made us all much more aware of hand hygiene and the importance of it, outside the healthcare environment too. From schools and offices to restaurants and hotels, from office blocks to trains and buses and planes. What we need to consider is how we manage to maintain the same level of conscious personal hygiene habits when there isn't the pressure or the publicity around it driven by a pandemic and how we combat some of the disadvantages that dissuade us from over washing.

Washing our hands primarily removes dirt, grease and unwanted micro-organisms and as such, most hand soaps are developed using 'detergency' as a key performance parameter. The downside is that detergency removes both unwanted dirt as well as the skin's natural protection which needs other ingredients such as emollients to help repair its protective capacity. As we have seen over the last couple of years during the pandemic, the more these soaps are used, the more stress is put on our skin, often resulting in dry and

cracked hands.

Our skin produces unique lipids, it is colonised by natural and beneficial resident microorganisms, creating the skin microbiome, which we need to keep our skin healthy. Our skin is not sufficiently equipped to cope with daily hot showers or baths or chlorinated water.

Over the past 2 years, the significant increase in the use of hand soaps, as well as alcohol-based gels, means that our skin has been subjected to types of surfactants and cleansers that strip it of its natural oils, putting excessive stress on it. This stripping of natural oils, which leads to redness, sensitivity and dryness, is called trans epidermal water loss and causes the skin to lose moisture. It has also been found that some of the bacteria that live on the skin help prevent dermatitis, and that people with eczema are deprived of these good bacteria. Eczema also makes the skin somewhat “permeable”, making it more vulnerable to the effects of an irritant such as hard water, for example. This leads then to a natural hesitancy to wash our hands as regularly as we should.

Add to this the potential for confusion from all the various options we have from a hand care point of view. From hand washes or hand soaps, through antibacterial products, to alcohol based and non-alcohol-based sanitisers and hand rubs, to barrier creams and moisturisers, the list and the choice is seemingly endless, tarnished by the unscrupulous merchants who muddied the arena with their methanol-based sanitisers early on. Check out the Cleenol white paper on how to pick the right hand sanitiser

<https://cleenol.com/blogs/news/70-alcohol-vs-alcohol-free-navigating-guidance-on-hand-sanitisers>

At the end of the day, all we need to remember is what our grand parents used to drum in to us as children – wash your hands after visiting the bathroom first and foremost! Using a combination of hand soaps and hand rubs during the day, and especially after bathroom breaks or smoking and before meals will help contain most hand/mouth borne infections and help us play our part in saving lives with clean hands.