

2 May 2017, Cairo – World Hand Hygiene Day, marked globally on 5 May, highlights the importance of hand hygiene in health care. The slogan of this year’s campaign is “Fight antibiotic resistance ... it’s in your hands”, illustrating the important relationship between good infection prevention and control practices like washing your hands and preventing antibiotic resistance.

World Hand Hygiene Day plays an important role in highlighting good infection prevention and control practices to change behaviours to reduce the spread of infections and therefore save the lives of millions. Without behaviour change, antibiotic resistance will remain a major threat.

Through this year’s campaign, the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on countries and health care facilities to strengthen infection prevention and control programmes based on WHO guidelines on core components of infection prevention and control programmes. A key component of which is adequate hand hygiene, which plays a critical role in combating antimicrobial resistance.

“Health care-associated infections are one of the most frequent adverse events in health care delivery and are a major public health problem that affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide,” says Dr Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

One out of every 10 patients gets an infection while receiving care, and up to 32% of patients receiving surgical care get a post-operative infection, of which up to 51% are resistant to treatment with antibiotics. WHO calls on policy-makers to stop antibiotic resistance spread by making infection prevention and hand hygiene a national policy priority.

WHO also calls on infection prevention and control leaders to implement WHO’s core components for infection prevention, including hand hygiene, to combat antibiotic resistance.

“Health care-associated infections cause harm and suffering that are easily avoided. They also result in additional financial burden and sometimes even long-term disabilities or death.” The Regional Director added, “I urge all health care workers to ensure adequate hand hygiene and all health care facilities to join in the “SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands” campaign and commit to

improving hand hygiene practices to help save more lives”.

Hospital administrators are expected to lead a year-round infection prevention and control programme to protect their patients from resistant infections. Adequate hand hygiene reduces the risk of health care-associated infections and has the potential to save 8 million lives every year in hospitals alone. Clean hands make the health system a safer place to receive care.



[Poster \[PDF, 984kb\]](#) [Roll up \[PDF, 1.5MB\]](#)

[Message of Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, on the occasion of World Hand Hygiene Day 2017](#)

Related link

[SAVE LIVES: Clean your hands](#)

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