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Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR): Dispenser Placement Recommendations

Purpose

To describe best practice recommendations for the placement of Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR) to support hand hygiene in accordance with the Interior Health [Hand Hygiene Guideline](#) and the [4 Moments for Hand Hygiene](#), while applying an understanding of typical workflow and patient safety considerations.

Background

Hand hygiene, or hand cleaning, is the single most important procedure for preventing the spread of hospital associated infections. Well placed ABHR supports performance of hand hygiene at the appropriate times. The goal is to place ABHR dispensers within the pattern of workflow to ensure convenience while reducing opportunity for misuse.

A workflow assessment and point-of-care risk assessment will help determine appropriate placement of ABHR dispensers in areas where patients (includes clients or residents) may not have the capacity to understand the negative effects of ingestion or misuse. These include, but are not limited to pediatric units, units with cognitively impaired individuals, addiction and mental health units, and any care spaces inhabited by patients assessed as at risk to ingest ABHR. Placement should be assessed by an interdisciplinary team familiar with the program and patient population.

Best Practices

Placement of ABHR

Standardized ABHR placement guidelines are observed in all healthcare settings throughout Interior Health, per the CSA Z8000:24 specifications, including but not limited to:

- At entrances to facilities and patient care areas.
- At entrances and exits to units, patient rooms, treatment rooms, soiled utility rooms, laundry rooms, housekeeping rooms, medication rooms, clean and sterile supply rooms, tub/shower rooms and health care provider rooms.
- At point of care, within one metre of the patient bed.
- In dining rooms, waiting rooms, nursing stations and common areas.
- Outside of all elevators.
- Affixed to the mobile work carts such as med carts, dressing carts, clean linen carts, housekeeping carts, maintenance cart and others.
- In any location where PPE is donned and doffed.

Considerations for ABHR Dispenser Placement

- Contact your facility Fire Marshal or Protection Services for ABHR fire safety guidelines at your facility.
- Dispenser height should show consideration for users of various heights.
- Adjacent to all points-of-care in all situations, except where the presence of ABHR (alcohol) would compromise patient safety.
- Locations close to clinical care areas where monitoring is easy to achieve and opportunities for intentional ingestion, vandalism and theft are minimal.
- Locations where personal protective equipment is donned or doffed (anterooms).
- At all facility entrances (public and staff entrances).
- Immediately adjacent to the entrance to patient care areas and patient rooms.
- Outside elevators but limited to one dispenser along the wall adjacent to the elevators.
- Environmental services (EVS) carts should contain both ABHR refills in a locked drawer/cabinet, as well as a locked dispenser for EVS staff use.

Where NOT to Place ABHR Dispensers

- At or adjacent to handwashing sinks.
- Over or directly adjacent to an ignition source (at least 15cm away from electrical outlet or switch).
- Above carpeted areas.
- In or around parkades, stairwells, and connector hallways and other minimally supervised areas.

Wall-Mounted ABHR Dispensers

- Located so that splashing or dripping onto adjacent wall and floor surfaces is minimized.
- Adjacent floor and wall surfaces should be protected from ABHR (drip tray/wall protection).
- Dispensers should be mounted approximately 1 meter above floor height.
- Located where they are not likely to be bumped into by stretchers, wheelchairs, people, or other equipment.
- Include a drip tray with a narrow gap between the tray and dispenser that prohibits the easy fit of a cup or other small container underneath, while protecting adjacent surfaces from damage from ABHR fluid.
- In high-risk areas, use a stainless-steel dispenser with stainless steel lock.

Portable ABHR Dispensers

- Limit the use of portable ABHR dispensers to monitored staff areas.
- Portable ABHR dispensers should not exceed 400 mL.
- Portable ABHR dispensers must be secured to the cart or surface with a locking device and must be visible to staff at all times.

Personal ABHR Dispensers

- Used where wall-mounted or portable ABHR dispensers cannot be installed or when point-of care hand hygiene is required (e.g., Home Care).
- Should be attached with a belt clip or carried in a pocket.
- Should be of sufficient volume to last through a shift (e.g., 50 mL), must be disposable and never topped up.



References

1. Alberta Health Services (AHS) ABHR Dispenser Placement Recommendations
2. Public Health Ontario, Selection and Placement of ABHR during COVID-19 in Long-term Care and Retirement Homes
3. Canadian Standards Association. (2024). Z8000:24. Canadian health care facilities.

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