

# COLA *FAST FACTS* 35-2016

## *COLA Patient Safety Program – Hand Hygiene*

*COLA began the COLA Patient Safety Program in 2008 with the intent of focusing on areas in laboratory medicine that are found to have high error rates and significant impact on patient safety. COLA is also focused on reducing the frequency of citations for criteria that impact, or can potentially impact, patient safety. Through this program, COLA will identify an existing COLA criterion or patient safety issue as the patient safety goal for each year, and provide education on good laboratory practices for implementation of that safety goal. The program has also been integrated into the COLA survey process.*

The COLA Patient Safety Goal for 2016 is:

**FAC 14: Do you have a written bloodborne pathogens exposure control plan and do all applicable employees receive annual training on the plan?**

This is an OSHA requirement and needs to be a written document. You should comply with OSHA requirements for handling bloodborne pathogens, and state and/or local requirements for disposal of hazardous waste. OSHA requires that all applicable employees receive annual training on this plan.

One of the required elements for your Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan is handwashing. Handwashing plays an important role in minimizing the spread of infection.

According to OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens standards [1910.1030(d)]:<sup>1</sup>

- Employers must provide handwashing facilities that are accessible to employees.
- When handwashing facilities are not available, the employer must provide an appropriate antiseptic hand cleanser along with clean cloth/paper towels or antiseptic towelettes. When antiseptic hand cleansers or towelettes are used, hands must be washed with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Employees must wash their hands immediately or as soon as possible after removal of gloves or other personal protective equipment.
- Employees must wash hands and any other skin with soap and water, or flush mucous membranes with water immediately or as soon as possible following contact of such body areas with blood or other potentially infectious materials.

Consider these facts on the importance of hand hygiene:<sup>2</sup>

- Hand hygiene is now regarded as one of the most important elements of infection control activities.
- If properly implemented, hand hygiene alone can significantly reduce the risk of cross-transmission of infection in healthcare facilities.
- Proper hand hygiene is the single most important, simplest, and least expensive means of reducing the prevalence of healthcare associated infections and the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Stress the importance of handwashing to your staff. Ensure that your Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan has all of the OSHA required elements including handwashing and perform annual training for all employees. Not only does this practice help prevent the transmission of infection to patients, but also helps minimize the spread of infection to employees.

Think about this important patient safety goal, and take steps to ensure compliance in your laboratory.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_id=10051&p\\_table=STANDARDS](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_id=10051&p_table=STANDARDS)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3249958/>