

Learn how to wash your hands

Tan Tock Seng Hospital launches a campaign to teach good hand hygiene

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HOW you wash your hands can help to stop the spread of hospital-acquired infections.

And Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) is pulling out all stops to get the message about the importance of correct hand washing across.

The hospital launched its Clean, Safe and Infection Free campaign last month to teach the public when and how they should clean their hands, since infection can be brought in by visitors or brought out to the community by them as well.

"Hand washing for good hygiene is always promoted by all health promotion boards (local and abroad) ... we are taking another step further to teach people how to wash properly," said Professor Chng Hiok Hee, who is leading TTSH's public education efforts.

Good hand hygiene, said Prof Chng, is crucial in stemming the spread of hospital



Good hand hygiene is crucial in stemming the spread of hospital acquired infections.

PHOTO COURTESY TTSH

acquired infections, and there is "no reason" why the public should not learn the seven steps to hand washing as used by medical professionals.

"If we are very careful in the hospital, but have somebody who comes in from the outside who is not careful, everything is undone," said the head and senior consultant of the department of rheumatology, allergy and immunology.

TTSH has already trained its 5,100 staff and volunteers on hand hygiene and put in place a group of "helpers" to ensure people practise what they learn.

The hospital had the second-highest rate of infection – 3.3 per 1,000 patients – caused by a bacterium known as methi-

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cillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* in 2007. The superbug is resistant to common antibiotics, making it difficult to treat.

TTSH will also hold a 10-week promotional campaign from April 27 which will offer not only hospital staff and volunteers but also the public a chance to win a car, sponsored by Subaru Motor Image, if they display proper hand-washing techniques.

Hand-washing demonstrations will be held at TTSH in May and United Square in June. Participants who successfully follow the seven steps will be given a coupon for the lucky draw. Those spotted washing their hands properly in the hospital will also be given a coupon.

More visitors are already cleaning their hands with the alcohol rubs or hand wash placed throughout the hospital after posters on hand washing were put up last month, noted TTSH's director for corporate communications Olivia Branson.

Prof Chng said an infection can be picked up anywhere in the community, citing the severe acute respiratory syndrome and infections such as hand, foot and mouth disease as examples which can be passed through hand contact.