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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### *Wash Your Hands! at Middlesex Hospital Alliance*

The Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) launched a *Wash Your Hands* campaign last week as part of the Patient Safety Council's goal to promote safety and hygiene.

"Patients have rights, and responsibilities, when it comes to safety," Nancy Maltby-Webster, Chief Operating Officer at MHA and the Council lead, says. "We want our staff to be most diligent in washing their hands properly and we want the public to feel comfortable in asking about that," she adds.

The Wash Your Hands Campaign will run for two weeks at both Four Counties and Strathroy sites. "We want to raise awareness about the importance of hand washing as a simple and effective method to reduce infection – at the hospitals – and anywhere," Maltby-Webster says.

Hand washing is the one thing *everyone* can do, simply easily and frequently to reduce infection – at the hospital, at home at school and at the workplace. "Viruses that cause illness can live on your hands for eight to twelve hours," Yvonne Richardson, Infection Control Manager at MHA, says, "washing your hands properly with soap and water or with hand sanitizer kills these viruses."

New posters at both the Four Counties and the Strathroy site will remind patients, visitors and staff to wash their hands and staff will be wearing buttons that promote the campaign also. "Our staff, nurses, and doctors will all be wearing buttons that encourage patients to ask us 'Did you Wash your Hands?' It's important that patients feel they have the right to ask. This is not an 'unmentionable subject' – it's important to your health and you have a right to politely ask," Richardson says.

The Wash Hands campaign is one initiative of the MHA's Patient Safety Council. A number of other Patient Safety initiatives have already been undertaken and others are being reviewed for future. For example, more "grab bars" are being installed in patient

rooms to reduce falls, a new Drug Profile Viewer is now used in the Emergency department that allows physicians fast access to medications history for many patients, and the hospital pharmacy has implemented a new program to avoid medication error.

The MHA Patient Safety Council seeks to decrease the incidence of unusual occurrences and adverse events, and to encourage awareness of and promotion for Patient Safety. “Our hospitals are safe, but no hospital is without incident,” Maltby-Webster says, “Working to make our sites as safe as possible is the focus of the MHA Patient Safety Advisory Council.”