



Clinical Appearance, Hand Hygiene and Fingernail Policy

V.1 July 2026

1. Purpose

The College of Foot Health (CoFH) are committed to maintaining the highest standards of infection prevention and control, professionalism and patient safety.

This policy sets out the standards expected of all individuals undertaking clinical practice, teaching, assessment or patient care under the auspices of the CoFH. Adherence to these standards promotes patient confidence, reduces the risk of healthcare-associated infection and supports compliance with recognised infection prevention guidance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, contractors, consultants, associates and volunteers working on behalf of the CoFH.
- All CoFH members when providing clinical care, teaching, assessing, supervising students or representing either organisation.
- All students enrolled on CoFH education programmes whilst undertaking clinical practice or practical training.
- Any individual delivering clinical services or education under the authority of the CoFH.

Members remain responsible for complying with any additional infection prevention requirements of their employer, workplace or regulator. Where this policy sets a higher standard for activities undertaken on behalf of the CoFH, this policy shall apply.

3. General Principles

All clinicians are expected to maintain a professional appearance that inspires confidence while ensuring personal presentation does not compromise patient safety, effective hand hygiene, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) or infection prevention and control standards.

4. Fingernails

All clinical personnel must:

- Keep fingernails clean, natural and short, extending no further than the fingertip.
- Ensure fingernails do not interfere with effective hand hygiene or the safe use of clinical gloves.
- Keep nails free from dirt, damage and sharp edges.

The following are **not permitted** during any clinical activity:

- Nail polish (including clear polish).
- Gel polish.
- Shellac.
- Builder gel.
- Acrylic nails.
- Artificial nail extensions or overlays.
- Nail jewellery or decorative attachments.

Any damaged or lifting artificial nail products must be completely removed before undertaking clinical duties.

5. Hand and Wrist Jewellery

When undertaking clinical care, a **bare below the elbows** approach must be followed.

The following must not be worn during patient care:

- Wrist watches.
- Smart watches or fitness trackers.
- Bracelets.
- Rings with stones or multiple bands.

A single plain wedding band may be worn where appropriate but should be removed or moved to allow effective hand hygiene.

6. Hand Hygiene

Clinical personnel must:

- Perform hand hygiene before and after every patient contact.
- Wash hands with soap and water whenever visibly soiled.

- Use alcohol-based hand rub where appropriate.
 - Cover cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings.
 - Maintain healthy skin and seek advice if any skin condition may compromise safe clinical practice.
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7. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in an individual being excluded from clinical duties, teaching activities or practical sessions until compliance has been achieved.

For employees, non-compliance may be managed in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

For CoFH members, repeated or serious breaches may be referred for consideration under the relevant professional conduct, membership or fitness to practise procedures where applicable.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if national infection prevention guidance, legislation or professional standards change.

Policy Owner: Institute of Podiatrists (IoP) and College of Foot Health Practitioners (CoFH)

Approved by: Board of Directors

Review Period: Every three years