Infection Control and Prevention Program: A Guide for Patients and Visitors

Germs and infections can be passed from person to person at home or in the hospital. This brochure outlines the steps you can take to help reduce your risk of infection while you are in the hospital.

Visitors who are feeling ill or who are sick should not come to the hospital to visit.

Cleaning your hands

The most important step to prevent the spread of germs and infection is keeping your hands clean. Patients and visitors should clean their hands often, including:

- Before and after contact with the patient or patient's environment
- Before eating
- After touching bedpans, dressings, tissues or other soiled items
- After coughing, sneezing or nose blowing
- After using the bathroom, urinal or bedpan
- After touching any blood or body fluids
- After handling money

The most important step to prevent the spread of germs and infections is keeping your hands clean.

When washing your hands with soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water.
2. Use soap to work up a good lather, and rub for at least 20 seconds.
3. Cover all areas, including between your fingers, under your fingernails and around your nail beds.
4. Rinse well with clean, running water.
5. Dry with a clean towel or let your hands air dry.
6. If the sink has handles, use a clean paper towel to turn off the water.
7. Throw away all used paper towels.

When washing your hands with waterless hand cleaners or alcohol-based hand sanitizers:

1. If your hands are visibly soiled, wash them with soap and water.
2. Put 1 pump of the cleaner/sanitizer on your hands.
3. Rub all surfaces of your hands together. Be sure to include your palms, backs of your hands, between your fingers and around your nails. Rub them until they are dry.
4. Do not rinse the product with water or use paper towels to dry your hands.

Other precautions

Healthcare workers also may use more precautions, such as wearing gloves, gowns, masks or eye protection. Your care team will let visitors know if they should follow any of these precautions. In some cases, healthcare workers may use other precautions as well. If so, they will explain them.

If you know or think that you have an infection, please tell your physician or nurse.

The safety of patients, physicians, staff and the community remains our top priority. Thank you for helping reduce the spread of infection.