

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

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 information outlines the guidelines to help reduce your risk of infections while you are in the hospital.

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

Clean 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 eating
- After touching bedpans, dressings, tissues or other soiled items
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom, urinal or bedpan
- After touching any blood or body fluids
- After handling money

In addition, visitors should also clean their hands when entering and leaving patient rooms.

To wash your hands with soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with warm water.
2. Use soap to work up a good lather, and rub for at least 15 seconds.
3. Rinse well with warm water.
4. Dry with paper towels.
5. If the sink has handles, use a clean paper towel to turn off the water.
6. Throw away all used paper towels.

To use waterless hand cleaners or alcohol gels:

- Place 1 pump (about the size of a nickel) of product on your hands.
- Rub your hands on all surfaces. Be sure to include your palms, backs of your hands, between fingers and around nails until they are dry. Do not rinse the product with water or use paper towels to dry.

Other Precautions

Healthcare workers also will use other standard precautions, such as use of gloves, gowns, masks or eye protection. Visitors will be informed if any of these precautions are necessary for them. In some cases, healthcare workers may also use additional precautions if needed. If so, these will be explained.

Patients, if you know or suspect that you have an infection, please tell your doctor or nurse.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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