

Infection Prevention *and* You

Learn how others are working to help keep you safe from infection and how you can participate in your care.

IN OUTPATIENT SETTINGS

Who are “infection preventionists?”

Every healthcare provider is an infection preventionist working to help protect you from healthcare-associated infections. In fact, some facilities/agencies will have a dedicated individual assigned to oversee and coordinate all infection prevention activities.

An infection preventionist’s number one priority is your safety. They strive to keep you, visitors, volunteers, employees, and healthcare providers safe from infection.

What are healthcare-associated infections?

A healthcare-associated infection is one that can occur as a result of the care or treatment that a patient receives. The most common types of healthcare-associated infections are pneumonia, gastrointestinal, bloodstream, surgical site, and skin infections.

How does an infection preventionist affect the care I receive?

Infection preventionists partner with members of your healthcare team and use proven methods to help you stay safe from healthcare-associated infections during your visit (or while receiving care).

You may notice the presence of infection prevention activities throughout the facility, such as:

- Alcohol-based hand rub and hand washing stations
- Disinfectant wipes
- “Cover your cough” signs
- Healthcare providers wearing gloves, masks and/or gowns, as appropriate for the type of care they are providing
- Evidence that surfaces and equipment are being cleaned

What do I need to know to stay safe?

Your direct care providers are concerned about your health and safety. They want you to have a voice and participate in your care. You and your family are important members of the healthcare team.

Please speak up! Do not feel shy about asking for more information about your care. Infection prevention is everyone’s business!

If you have a concern, feel free to ask the following or any other questions:

- If you have not seen healthcare staff who care for you either use alcohol-based hand rub or wash their hands, ask them to do so. This also applies to visitors.
“I didn’t see you clean your hands. Would you please clean your hands before touching me?”
- Before receiving an injection or IV, ask if the needle, tubing, vial, and syringe has/have been newly opened for you.
“Is this the first time this needle, tubing, vial, and syringe have been used?”
- If you have an IV, tell your nurse if it becomes painful or the bandage (also called a dressing) becomes loose.
“My IV doesn’t feel right, please check it.”
- If you have a bandage, let your nurse know if it gets wet, loose, or feels uncomfortable.
“Can you please check my bandage? It’s loose and uncomfortable.”
- If you are having surgery, ask your doctor if you should shower with an antiseptic soap at home before the procedure.
“Am I supposed to shower with an antiseptic soap? If so, can you explain this process to me?”
- If you had surgery or a minor procedure, ask if there are special instructions for caring for the incision after you go home.
“Is there anything special I should do protect the incision?”
- If you think that the area around you or the equipment in your room looks dirty, ask to have it cleaned.
“This [_____] looks dirty. Can someone please clean this?”

Important reminders

- Use alcohol-based hand rub or wash your hands often and ask your caregivers and visitors to do the same. This is one of the most important ways to prevent infection.
- Take antibiotics exactly as directed, if prescribed.
- Call your provider with any concerns or questions.

Infection prevention contact:

How can I learn more about infection prevention?

Visit the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)’s website www.apic.org/patientsafety to learn more about how you can protect yourself and loved ones from infection.

