



Infection Prevention and You

Protect Yourself and Others from Getting an Infection When Receiving Healthcare

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are infections people get while they are receiving healthcare for another condition. Hospitals, surgery centers, nursing homes, and any other setting where you or your family receive healthcare should keep everyone safe and free from infection. Each of us—patients, families, and healthcare personnel—have an important role to play in preventing HAIs.

Here are some important things to remember to help you and your family stay safe while receiving healthcare.

Speak Up for Your Care

Always talk with your healthcare providers, ask questions, and discuss your concerns. Whenever a treatment is recommended, ask why it is necessary and what risks are associated with it. If you need a catheter (a device inserted into your body to drain fluid, such as urine), ask every day when it can be removed. Write questions down before speaking to your healthcare provider, so that you don't forget anything!

Clean Your Hands Often

Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of infection. Make sure that everyone around you, including your healthcare providers and visitors (if you are admitted to a healthcare facility), cleans their hands. If you don't see your healthcare provider clean their hands, speak up. Healthcare workers have been educated about hand hygiene and expect patients to ask if they didn't see them clean their hands. It is important that you are also diligent about washing your own hands when you are caring for yourself or touching others.

Get Smart About Antibiotics

Ask your provider if antibiotics are necessary and make sure to ask if it is the right antibiotic. Also, don't expect to receive antibiotics for every illness, as antibiotics can only treat bacterial infections. Diarrhea can accompany antibiotic usage, and it is important that you report frequent episodes of diarrhea to your healthcare provider.

Recognize an Infection

Some signs and symptoms of an infection may include redness, pain, or drainage at the incision site. Many times these symptoms are accompanied by fever. There may be other signs and symptoms, depending on whether you

had a catheter or other device inserted during your treatment. Always contact your healthcare provider for additional guidance.

Protect Yourself with Vaccinations

Remember to get your annual flu vaccine and stay up to date on COVID vaccinations and other vaccines as recommended by your healthcare provider. Vaccines prevent disease, minimize complications from disease, and save lives.

Make Visitors Stay Home When They are Sick

If you or a loved one is admitted to a healthcare facility, ask family and friends not to visit if they aren't feeling well, so as not to make others sick. They should stay home until they have fully recovered from their illness.

You play an important role in preventing HAIs! Remember: Your health is in your hands!

More Resources

AHRQ's Healthcare-Associated Infections Program, AHRQ.gov. Retrieved 7 July 2022.

<https://www.ahrq.gov/hai/index.html>

Healthcare-Associated Infections, HealthyPeople.gov. Retrieved 7 July 2022.

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/healthcare-associated-infections>

WHO launches first ever global report on infection prevention and control, WHO.int. Retrieved 7 July 2022. <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2022-who-launches-first-ever-global-report-on-infection-prevention-and-control>

Patient Safety: What You Can Do to Be a Safe Patient, CDC.gov. Retrieved 7 July 2022.

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/patientsafety/patient-safety.html>

Know the top 10 ways patients and families can prevent infection, APIC.org.

<https://infectionpreventionandyou.org/infection-prevention-basics/>

APIC factsheets, APIC.org. <https://apic.org/covid-factsheets/>

Infection Prevention and You Infographics, APIC.org.

<https://infectionpreventionandyou.org/infographic/>