

Infection Prevention *and* You

IN LONG-TERM CARE

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

Who are “infection preventionists?”

Every healthcare provider is an infection preventionist working to protect you from healthcare-associated infections. In fact, some long-term care facilities will have a designated individual 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, and employees safe from infection.

What are healthcare-associated infections?

A healthcare-associated infection is one that can occur as a result of a resident’s care or treatment. The most common types of healthcare-associated infections are urinary tract, respiratory, gastrointestinal, skin (such as pressure ulcers), and bloodstream infections.

How does an infection preventionist affect the care I receive?

Infection preventionists partner with your healthcare team members and use proven methods to help you stay safe from healthcare-associated infections.

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

- Alcohol-based hand rubs 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
- Skin testing for tuberculosis
- Evidence that surfaces and equipment are being cleaned
- Vaccination programs for residents and staff, including influenza and pneumococcal vaccines

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 in your care. You and your family are an important part 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 a caregiver either use alcohol-based hand rub or wash his/her hands, ask them to do so. This also applies to visitors.
 - **“I didn’t see you clean your hands. Would you mind cleaning your hands before touching me?”**
 - **“Could you please change your gloves and clean your hands before assisting me or touching my things?”**
- **Before** receiving an injection or IV, ask if the needle, tubing, vial, and syringe have been newly opened for you.
 - **“Is this the first time this needle, vial, tubing, and syringe have been used?”**
- If you have a catheter in your bladder, tell your caregiver if it leaks or becomes painful. If you have an IV in your vein, tell your caregiver if it becomes loose or painful. Also ask each day when it can be removed.
 - **“This is painful. Can you please check it for me?”**
 - **“Do I still need this catheter? Why?”**
- If you have a bandage (also called a “dressing”), let your caregiver know if it gets wet, loose, or feels uncomfortable.
 - **“Can you please check my bandage?”**
- Ask your provider if you need any vaccines.
 - **“Should I be receiving vaccines to protect me?”**
- 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?”**

If you’re a visitor

- Do NOT touch the resident’s dressings, medical equipment, or supplies.
- Do NOT sit on the resident’s bed. Pull up a chair instead.
- If you are assisting with the resident’s care, be certain to follow the directions provided by the staff.
- Visit often and be an advocate for the resident. Ask questions about his/her care, as appropriate.
- Do NOT visit if you’re feeling ill.

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.
- Ask 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.

