

## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Stay clean and use good hygiene to help stop the spread of infection. Items used in health care, such as bandages or gloves, can spread infection and harm the environment. They can harm trash handlers, family members and others who touch them if they are not disposed of properly. Be careful when you handle them.

Some illnesses and treatments (such as chemotherapy, dialysis, AIDS, autoimmune conditions, diabetes and burns) can make people more at risk for infection. Your nurse will tell you how to use protective clothing (such as gowns or gloves) if you need it.

Please tell your doctor or a home care staff member if you notice any of the following signs and symptoms of infection:

- Pain, tenderness, redness or swelling
- Inflamed skin, rash, sores or ulcers
- Pain when urinating
- Confusion
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Fever or chills
- Sore throat or cough
- Increased tiredness or weakness
- Green or yellow pus

### WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands frequently and properly, even if you wear gloves. It is the single most important step in controlling the spread of infection.

Always wash hands before:

- Tending to a sick person
- Treating a cut or wound
- Touching or eating food

Always wash hands after:

- Tending to a sick person
- Treating a cut or wound
- Using the bathroom
- Touching animals or their waste
- Touching soiled linens
- Touching garbage
- Changing diapers
- Coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

**If you have visibly dirty hands**, or they are contaminated or soiled in any way, wash them with soap (liquid soap is best) and warm running water. Remove jewelry, apply soap, wet your hands and rub them together for at least 20 seconds. Wash all surfaces, including wrists, palms, back of hands, between fingers and under nails. Rinse off the soap and dry your hands with a clean towel that has not been shared. If one is not available, air-dry your hands. Use a towel to turn off the faucet. If you used paper towels, throw them in the trash. To avoid dry or chapped hands, pat them dry and use lotion after washing.

If you do not have visibly dirty hands, use an alcohol-based hand rub to clean them. Use a rub with 60-90% ethyl or isopropyl alcohol. Open the cap or spout and apply a dime-size amount (or the amount recommended on the label) in one palm, then rub hands vigorously, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until they are dry.

### **COVER YOUR COUGH**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth with your upper sleeve, not your hands. Throw your used tissue in the trash. You may be asked to wear a mask to protect others.

### **DISPOSABLE ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT**

**For items that are not sharp:** *paper cups, tissues, dressings, bandages, plastic equipment, catheters, diapers, Chux, plastic tubing, gloves, etc.*

Store these in a clean, dry area. Dispose of used items in waterproof (plastic) bags. Fasten the bags securely and throw them in the trash.

### **NON-DISPOSABLE ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT**

**For items that are not thrown away:** *dirty laundry, dishes, thermometers, toilets, walkers, wheelchairs, bath seats, suction machines, oxygen equipment, mattresses, etc.*

Wash dirty laundry separately in hot, soapy water. Handle it as little as possible so you don't spread germs. If the patient has a virus, add a mix of one-part bleach and ten parts water to the load.

**Clean equipment as soon as you use it.** Wash small items (not thermometers) in hot, soapy water, then rinse and dry them with clean towels. Wipe thermometers with alcohol before and after each use. Store them in a clean, dry place. Wipe off equipment with a normal disinfectant or bleach mix. Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the item and ask your nurse or therapist if you have questions.

**Pour liquids in the toilet.** Clean their containers with hot, soapy water, then rinse them with boiling water and let them dry.

## **SHARP OBJECTS**

**For sharp items:** *Needles, syringes, lancets, scissors, knives, staples, glass tubes and bottles, IV catheters, razors, etc.*

Put used sharps in a clean, hard plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tight lid. Seal it with heavy-duty tape and dispose of it in the trash or according to area regulations. Do not overfill sharps containers or re-cap used needles. **DO NOT** use glass or clear plastic containers. Never put sharps in containers that will be recycled or returned to a store.

## **BODY FLUID SPILLS**

Wear gloves and wipe the fluid with paper towels. Use a solution of one-part bleach and ten parts water to wipe the area again. Double-bag used paper towels and put them in the trash.