

Patient Education Sheet

A Guide to Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette for Patients and Visitors

Infection Prevention and Control

Preventing the spread of infections is a primary focus of health care workers at the Hospital. Key to this is good hand hygiene and following infection prevention practices. The CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) states that "hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infections."

- ✓ The Infection Control Department teach all new employees about the importance of hand washing as well as other infection prevention practices.
- ✓ All staff members are required to participate in annual training that strongly reinforces the importance of good hand washing for patient safety.

How do you protect your family or yourself while in the hospital and when you go home?

HAND HYGIENE IS THE KEY TO PROTECTION:

- ❖ **Soap and water** is a mechanical means of removing debris and bacteria from the skin and reducing the chance of spreading germs or bacteria from one person to another.
- ❖ **Alcohol-based hand gel** is a chemical means of inhibiting or killing surface bacteria by coating the hands and preventing the germs from spreading.

The proper way to achieve good hand hygiene:

With soap and water:



- **Use soap** (it doesn't have to be antibacterial) and water. Water temperature doesn't matter but washing time and friction do. Lather and wash for about **15 seconds** (sing the "Happy Birthday" song!) making sure to clean nooks and crannies as well as under the fingernails.
- **Rinse** thoroughly under running water.
- **Dry** with a clean paper towel or use a hot-air dryer.
- **Before you dispose of the paper towel**, use it to turn off the water faucet.
- **You may also want to use a paper towel** to open the door because door handles harbor germs. Throw the towel away after you leave.

With alcohol hand gel which kills 99% of germs:



- Use a sufficient amount to entirely coat the hands
- Allow it to dry. Do not wipe off the gel without letting it dry or it will not kill the germs/bacteria.

What is the hospital doing to encourage good hand hygiene?

- ❖ **Every patient** in the Hospital is placed on Standard Precautions. This means that every patient is considered to be potentially infectious. Staff is required to use hand hygiene before and after patient contact, as well as after contact with equipment.
- ❖ **The Hospital** has a Hand Hygiene Policy as well as a Fingernail Policy with all protocols and procedures explained.
- ❖ **Throughout the hospital**, the healthcare staff is making observations of their peers as they perform hand hygiene in order to increase the overall hospital rate.

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Serious respiratory illnesses like influenza can be spread by:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Unclean hands



What can you do to prevent the spread of serious respiratory illnesses like influenza?

- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- ✓ If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- ✓ Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- ✓ Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing

You may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others.

What can you do to reduce the risk of you or a loved one getting an infection while in the hospital and when going home?

- ✓ Remind all staff (including doctors) to wash their hands when they come into your room.
- ✓ Wash your own hands frequently, ask for help if needed.
- ✓ Get an annual flu vaccination.
- ✓ Get a pneumonia vaccination if you are eligible.
- ✓ Ask friends or family to stay away if they are ill.
- ✓ Keep your IV dressing clean and dry and call a nurse if the dressing or catheter becomes loose.