

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Good communication is important so talk to a healthcare worker if you have any concerns, and follow instructions given to you.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce the risk of infection:

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand rub.
- Do not be afraid to ask a healthcare worker if they have cleaned their hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (or into your elbow if you don't have a tissue) and clean you hands afterwards.
- Report any infections you have had, especially if you are still on antibiotics.
- Make sure you take the full course of antibiotics you are given, even if you are feeling better.
- If you have a dressing or a wound, keep the skin around the area clean and dry. Let the healthcare worker who is looking after you know promptly if your dressing becomes loose or wet.
- Tell the healthcare worker who is looking after you if the drips, lines, tubes or drains inserted into your body become painful or the area around them becomes red, swollen or painful.
- Follow instructions you are given on looking after wounds or medical devices you have. Ask if you are not sure of what to do.
- Let the healthcare worker who is looking after you know if your room or equipment hasn't been cleaned properly.

VISITORS – REMEMBER

- Follow instructions on signs.
- Ask about rules for visiting – depending on infection risk your visit may be discouraged or limited.
- Ask if there are any special instructions - You may be asked not to bring personal items or flowers, which can harbour microorganisms harmful to patients.
- Be understanding – these precautions may seem extreme, but remember, they help protect everyone.

References:

NHMRC (2010) Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare. Commonwealth of Australia.

Produced by:

Rural Infection Control Practice Group (RICPRAC) Vic, 2008. Updated 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2018.

Consumer Input:

Reviewed by Consumer Advisory Committee, Western District Health Service, 2013.

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INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL



A Patient/Visitor Information Brochure
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**Feel free to ask questions.
Healthcare workers will be happy to talk
with you about
infection prevention and control.**

WHAT IS AN INFECTION?

An infection is an illness caused by microorganisms, such as bacteria or viruses.

An infection is known as infectious when it can be passed onto another person.



WHO IS AT RISK?

All patients, healthcare workers and visitors could be at risk of developing an infection while in a healthcare setting.

This risk is greatly reduced and managed by healthcare workers following a set of standard and transmission-based precautions. Patients and visitors being aware of these precautions, and following any instructions given, will also reduce the risk of spreading infection.

Everyone has an important role to play in preventing the spread of infection!

WHY PRECAUTIONS ARE USED

It is not practical to test all people for all diseases or infections all of the time, so for everyone's safety healthcare workers use what is known as standard precautions for all patient care.

STANDARD PRECAUTIONS

Healthcare workers have to assume that any person may be infectious, and so these precautions are used at all times with all patients irrespective of their illness.

Seeing a healthcare worker use these precautions does not mean that you are infectious, they are used by healthcare workers to help protect all people within a healthcare facility.

Examples of standard precautions are:

- Hand Hygiene - washing hands with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub.
- Gloves, aprons, gowns and eye protection when dealing with body fluids.
- Cleaning equipment between use.

Hand Washing with Soap and Water



Cleaning Hands with Alcohol Based Hand Rub



TRANSMISSION BASED PRECAUTIONS

Some patients may need extra care taken if they have certain diseases or infections and so extra precautions along with standard precautions are used.

These extra precautions are called transmission-based precautions and are put in place based on how the microorganism causing the infection or disease is spread.

Transmission based precautions may include:

- Healthcare workers wearing masks, gloves or gowns when in your room.
- Restricting what goes in and out of your room.
- Being placed into isolation in a single room.
- A single room with special air-conditioning.

An example of the type of sign you may see on an isolation room door



ISOLATION

Isolation is a very effective way to prevent the spread of some infections or diseases, but it can be uncomfortable for the patients and visitors.

You may still be allowed to have visitors if you are in isolation, and visitors will be told what do before going into the room.