

Tips to Prevent Infections: How Can You Help Fight Against Infections?

Did you know, at any time, over 1.4 million people suffer from infections acquired from hospitals?

Did you also know, the easiest and most effective way to stop the spread of germs is through proper hand hygiene?

What Is Hand Hygiene?

Hand hygiene includes any action of hand cleaning. It involves the physical removal of soil and germs.

Why is Hand Hygiene So Important?

To prevent the spread of germs that can cause infection. Germs in your home are not the same germs that are in the hospital. This increases your risk for infection while in the hospital.

When Should I Wash My Hands?

After using the bathroom, before/after eating, before leaving your room, after touching your face, after touching hospital surfaces such as bed rails, bedside tables, doorknobs, etc.

Should I Use Soap and Water or Alcohol-based hand Rub?

Use soap and water when your hands are visibly dirty and after you use the bathroom. Use alcohol-based hand rub when your hands are not visibly soiled, and when soap and water are not available or not easily accessible. Both are equally effective at killing and removing germs on your hands.

Who Should Wash Their Hands?

Everyone at Bluewater Health is responsible to participate in hand hygiene and help protect against infection. This includes all health-care providers, staff, volunteers, visitors and patients. *If you feel that someone has not cleaned their hands before giving you care, you have the right to ask them to clean their hands.*

What if I Need Help Washing My Hands?

Don't hesitate to ask a nurse for help to use the sink or alcohol-based hand rub. There should be a bottle of hand sanitizer attached to your bedside table when you arrive, however, if there isn't, ask a nurse to get you one.

How Else Can I Minimize the Risks?

- When you cough or sneeze, use a tissue or raise your arm up to your face and aim for the sleeve. Throw away used tissues right away.
- Keep the surfaces in your home and workplace clean and free of germs. Focus on doorknobs, light switches, and keyboards, or other high-touch surfaces.
- Don't use a standing basin of water to rinse your hands.
- Don't use a common hand towel, use disposable paper towel.
- Don't use sponges or non-disposable cleansing cloths unless you change them daily and launder them using detergent. Germs thrive on moist surfaces.

Did you know, it only takes 20 seconds of using either soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub to kill the germs on your hands? Try singing the 'Happy Birthday' song. This is roughly how long it should take.

References: Centers for Disease Control: A Patient's Guide, Hand Hygiene Saves Lives, Health Canada: The Benefits of Hand Washing (Updated 2010), Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (PIDAC) guidelines.