

A GUIDE FOR CARE AT HOME

Infection Control for the Home

Illnesses that spread from one person to another are called infectious diseases. Each one has its own way or ways of spreading. Contact with infected body fluids (such as blood, urine, feces, mucus) or with the droplets that are sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs is a way an infectious disease can spread. Sometimes, the illness can spread through an indirect link, such as having contact with items that have been freshly soiled by drainage from infected sores or discharges from the patient's body openings (nose, mouth, eyes, rectum).

Controlling the spread of an infectious disease means interrupting the way the illness travels from an infected person to a noninfected person. For example, if you have a cold and cover your mouth when you sneeze, you are stopping the spread of infected droplets.

Careful personal hygiene and household cleanliness are very effective in preventing the spread of disease. These and other helpful infection control measures are discussed below.

INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

1. Maintain good personal hygiene.
 - a. Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth after every meal and at bedtime.
 - b. Trim your fingernails and toenails routinely.
 - c. Wear clean and laundered clothes.
 - d. Change dirty clothing and bed linens routinely and as soon as you notice any soiling.
2. Wash your hands frequently.
 - a. Wash your hands before
 - Food preparation,
 - Eating food,
 - Serving food.
 - b. Wash your hands after
 - Using the toilet,
 - Contact with your own or another's body fluids,
 - Blowing or wiping your nose; coughing; sneezing
 - Outside activities.
3. Keep your household clean.
 - a. Avoid household clutter.
 - b. Ventilate your home with fresh air.
 - c. Mop the kitchen and bathroom floors routinely and when spills occur.
 - d. Clean the inside of the refrigerator routinely with soap and water.



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- e. Add a teaspoon of bleach to each quart of water used for flower vases
 - f. Add a teaspoon of vinegar to each quart of water or saline used for respiratory equipment, humidifiers, or dehumidifiers.
 - g. Wear gloves when cleaning bird cages, litter boxes, aquariums, and the like.
4. Clean contaminated household and medical equipment thoroughly.
- a. Scrub medical equipment with a 70% alcohol solution or a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water.
 - b. Clean such articles as soap dishes and denture cups routinely.
 - c. Do not use the same sponge to clean the bathroom and the kitchen.
 - d. Do not pour mop water down the kitchen sink.
 - e. Do not clean sponges or rags at the kitchen sink.
 - f. Disinfect mops and sponges routinely by soaking in a one-part bleach to 10 parts water solution for 5 minutes.
 - g. Flush body wastes down the toilet.
 - h. Do not clean bedpans, potty seats, or urinals in the kitchen sink.
 - i. Do not share towels, washcloths, lingerie, undergarments, and toothbrushes with anyone.
5. Decrease your exposure to people with infectious diseases.
- a. Avoid crowds whenever possible.
 - b. Avoid people with bacterial infections, cold sores, shingles, influenza, colds, chickenpox, or measles.
 - c. Cover your mouth with a tissue or your hand when sneezing and coughing. Put the soiled tissue into waste bag. Wash your hands.
 - d. Do not share food and drink with others.
 - e. Wash your hands frequently when outside of your home and when you return home.

Signs of a Possible Infection

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Chills and/or sweating
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Pain and/or burning with urination
- Cloudy or very dark urine
- Diarrhea
- Red skin, skin rashes
- Swelling near a cut or wound
- Yellow, tan, or green drainage from a cut or wound
- Stiff neck and/or headache
- Difficulty breathing and/or wheezing
- Persistent cough
- Fast pulse rate

Call your nurse if you have any of these signs of infection that do not go away.

