

## **Prevent the Spread of Infection—What Patients & Visitors Should Know**

In a hospital, patients have contact with many health care workers in very close quarters. Health care workers may have contact with people who have an infection and with other people who can become easily infected. Preventing the spread of infections in the hospital is important to help all patients recover quickly and stay as healthy as possible.

### **Who can get an infection?**

Anyone can get an infection, but some people are at a higher risk for infection than others, and some types of procedures or surgeries can increase a patient's risk of infection.

### **Who is at special risk for infection?**

- Newborn Babies
- People being treated for cancer
- People on dialysis for acute renal failure
- People who cannot fight infections
- People who have not had vaccinations
- People with diabetes
- People with open sores or cuts
- People with tubes for fluids or medications, like catheters or IV's
- Surgery or organ transplant patients

### **How does a person get an infection?**

Germs don't always cause disease in every person they contract. To cause an infection, the germ (bacteria, virus, fungus, or parasite) must come in contact with a person who is at risk, perhaps because of poor health or other factors.

Germs can spread to others in several ways:

- By direct physical contact with another person
- By touching a dirty object (used tissue, faucet, doorknob), and then touching their eyes or nose
- Through the air, from a cough or sneeze
- By eating or drinking foods contaminated with germs

### **How can you keep from getting an infection or giving an infection to someone else?**

Cleanliness, especially keeping your hands clean, is the key to infection prevention and control. Clark Fork Valley Hospital follows guidelines on hand hygiene from the Centers of Disease Control:

- If hands are visibly soiled, soap and water should be used to wash hands thoroughly
- If hands are not visibly soiled, a waterless, alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be used.

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**Please use the soap and hand sanitizers that have been placed in convenient locations throughout the hospital for everyone's use.**

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### **What else can you do to prevent the spread of infections in a hospital?**

- Dispose of used tissues immediately.
- Don't share glassware, silverware, towels, or cosmetics with a patient.
- Sanitize your hands before and after visiting a patient.
- Don't visit the hospital if you are ill.
- Learn the early signs of infection (redness, swelling, fever) and be alert for them.

**Fight the Flu! This year, ask your doctor if a flu shot (influenza vaccination) is right for you.**

### **Fight the Flu – Prevent Death**

Each year over 20,000 people in the US die because of influenza (the "flu") – most are over 65 years old. More people die from the flu than from any other vaccine-preventable disease.

### **Get a Flu Shot – Prevent Severe Illness**

The flu puts about 114,000 people in the hospital each year in the US. Children younger than 2 years old are as likely to be hospitalized as those over 65.

### **Vaccinate– Protect Other People**

People who live with or care for others who are at high risk of serious illness from the flu need a flu shot. They can give the flu to these people if they get the flu themselves.



**PREVENTING INFECTIONS**