



How to Prevent Healthcare Associated Infections

This information is intended as a guide for patients and their families on preventing healthcare associated infections.

Infection Prevention and Control at Grey Bruce Health Services

The Infection Prevention and Control Team at Grey Bruce Health Services work with staff, patients and visitors to stop the spread of infections in our hospitals. All patients admitted to Grey Bruce Health Services are screened for signs and symptoms of infection including a cough, shortness of breath, fever and gastrointestinal symptoms. You will also be asked if you have been hospitalized in the past year. If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may be placed under isolation precautions. Your nurse will explain any special measures that need to be taken. All inpatients are also tested for germs that are resistant to antibiotics in order prevent the spread of these germs to others.

What are antibiotic resistant germs and how do you test for them?

All people have germs all over their bodies including in their bowels, nose and on their skin—this is normal. Some of these germs change over time as they are exposed to antibiotics. Germs that no longer respond to certain antibiotics are called “antibiotic resistant”. The most common antibiotic resistant germ found in a hospital is Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or *MRSA*. This germ can easily be passed from one patient to another on hands, objects and shared equipment. These type of germs are not generally harmful to healthy people but can cause serious infections for very ill patients.

Your nurse will obtain a nasal swab from you to test for MRSA on admission to the hospital. This sample is collected by inserting a moistened cotton swab (Q-tip) to the inside of both nostrils then sent to the lab for testing. To prevent the spread of these germs it is important to find out as soon as possible which patients are carrying these germs so precautions can be taken. These precautions may include a private room and bathroom. Staff may wear gowns, gloves and masks when caring for you.

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What other tests might be done to help control the spread of infections?

- If you become fevered while in hospital, blood tests might be taken to see if a germ is growing in your blood.
- If you develop a cough, tests may be done to see if a germ is growing in your lungs or if you have a virus.
- If you start vomiting or having diarrhea, samples of your stool may be taken to see if a germ is causing you to be ill.

What can I do to reduce my chance of getting an infection or spreading one to someone else?

- Hand washing often with soap and water or hand sanitizer is the most important thing you can do while in hospital to stop the spread of infection.
- Always wash your hands after going to the bathroom or blowing your nose, before you eat and any time you leave or return to your room.
- It is okay to remind healthcare staff to wash their hands before they care for you.
- If you to leave your room, apply a face mask to help protect yourself, the healthcare staff and other patients from the spread of infection.
- Remind your family or visitors to wash their hands before they come in and when they leave your room. Ask your family and friends not to visit if they are feeling unwell, even if they think it is “just a cold”. Make a phone call or you’re your nurse to help you set a “virtual visit” using a mobile device to keep in touch with family and friends.

What is my healthcare team doing to prevent the spread of infection?

- All healthcare staff should wash their hands when they enter your room, before touching you or anything in your room.
- Healthcare staff may be wearing gloves, a gown, face mask or eye protection when caring for you. These items are used when caring for any patient with a possible infection and helps to prevent germs from spreading to the healthcare staff and other patients.
- Your nurse will let you and your family know the infection control and visitor policies that **must** be followed while in the hospital.
- If you have more questions about Infection Prevention and Control while you are in the hospital, please ask your doctor or nurse.