

Infection Prevention and You

Who are “infection preventionists?” [Infection preventionists](#) are among the many experts who help to protect you from healthcare-associated infections. They work in many healthcare settings.

The infection preventionist’s number one priority is your safety. They strive to keep you, visitors, volunteers, employees, and healthcare providers safe from infection.

What is a healthcare-associated infection?

A healthcare-associated infection is one that can occur while a patient receives care or treatment. These kinds of infections are often preventable.

How does an infection preventionist affect the care I receive?

Infection preventionists partner with your healthcare team and use proven methods to ensure that you stay safe from healthcare-associated infections during your stay.

Although you may not see the infection preventionist during your visit, you will notice the presence of infection prevention everywhere throughout the facility:

- Hand sanitizer gels or rubs inside and/or outside patient rooms or waiting areas
- Hand washing stations
- Disinfecting wipes
- “Cover your cough” signs
- Healthcare providers wearing gloves, masks, and gowns
- Environmental services cleaning staff who clean and disinfect surfaces throughout the healthcare facility

What do I need to know to stay safe? Your direct care providers are concerned about your health and safety. They want you to have a voice in your care. You are an important member of the healthcare team.

Please speak up! Do not feel shy about asking for [more information about your care](#). Infection prevention is everyone’s business! If you have a concern, feel free to ask the following questions:

- Before receiving an injection, ask if the needle, syringe, and vial have been newly opened for you.
 - “Is this the first time this needle, syringe, and vial have been used?”
- If you have not seen healthcare staff who care for you either wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub, ask them to do so. This also applies to visitors.
 - “Excuse me. I didn’t see you clean your hands. Would you mind cleaning your hands before touching me?”
- If you have a catheter in your bladder or vein, tell your nurse if it becomes loose or painful. Also ask each day when it can be removed.
 - “Do I still need this catheter today? Why?”
- If you are having surgery, ask your doctor if you should shower with an antiseptic soap before you are admitted.
 - “Am I supposed to shower with an antiseptic before I’m admitted? If so, can you explain this process to me?”
- Ask your provider if you need any shots or vaccines.
 - “Should I be receiving any shots or vaccines to protect me during my stay or after I go home?”
- If you think that the area around you or the equipment in your room looks dirty, ask to have it cleaned.
 - “Excuse me, this [_____] looks dirty. Can someone please clean this?”
- If you have a bandage (also called a “dressing”), let your nurse know if it gets wet, loose or feels uncomfortable.
 - “Excuse me, can you please check my bandage? It’s loose and uncomfortable.”

One last important reminder: Wash your hands or use alcohol hand rub often. This is one of the most important ways to prevent infection.