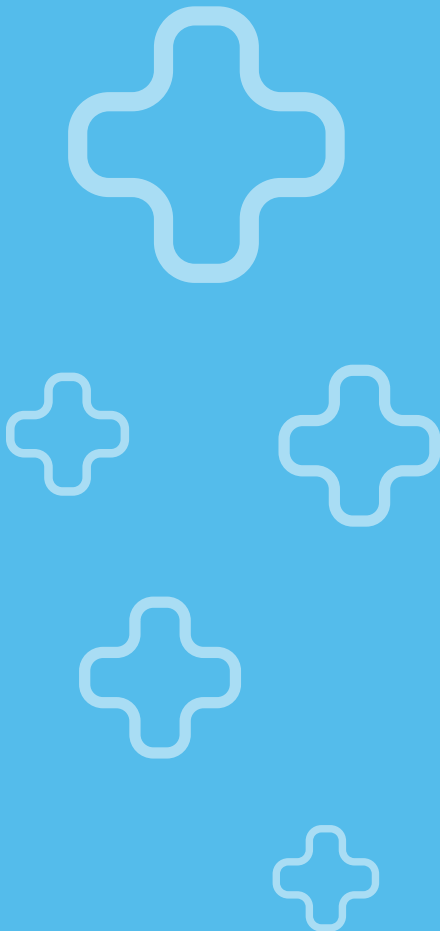


You and your family deserve clean, safe care.

Ask for it.



Facts About Hospital Infection:

- ✚ One out of every twenty hospital patients contracts an infection. These infections kill as many people in the U.S. as AIDS, breast cancer, and auto accidents combined.
- ✚ Hospital infections are largely preventable. A few hospitals in the U.S. and elsewhere are proving it, reducing infection rates by two-thirds or more.
- ✚ The single most important way to reduce hospital infections, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is for hospital staff to clean their hands before treating each patient. Research shows that doctors fail to clean their hands before treating a patient more than half the time, and when doctors don't clean their hands, other health care professionals working with them don't either.
- ✚ Hospital infections add \$30.5 billion to the nation's hospital costs each year. For example, a surgical site infection doubles a patient's hospital costs, on average.
- ✚ Hospital infections are becoming increasingly resistant to a broad range of antibiotics. In 1974, only 2% of hospital infections were antibiotic resistant. By 1995, that figure had climbed to 22%, and it is now 57% and rising. Rigorous attention to hygiene is an effective way to stop these drug-resistant bacteria from infecting patients.

For more information, visit www.hospitalinfection.org.



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REDUCE
your RISK

15 STEPS
you can take to
reduce your risk
of getting a
hospital infection



1

Ask that hospital staff clean their hands before treating you. This is the single most important way to protect yourself in the hospital. If you're worried about being too aggressive, just remember your life could be at stake. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are more effective at removing most bacteria than soap and water. Do not hesitate to say the following: "Excuse me, but there's an alcohol dispenser right there. Would you mind using that before you touch me, so I can see it?" Don't be falsely assured by gloves. If caregivers have pulled on gloves without cleaning their hands first, the gloves are already contaminated before they touch you.



2

Before your doctor uses a stethoscope to listen to your chest, ask that the diaphragm (or flat surface of the stethoscope) be wiped with alcohol. Stethoscopes are often contaminated with *Staphylococcus aureus* and other dangerous bacteria, because caregivers seldom take the time to clean them in between patient use.

3

If you need a "central line" catheter, ask your doctor about the benefits of one that is antibiotic-impregnated or silver-chlorhexidine coated to reduce infections.

4

If you need surgery, choose a surgeon with a low infection rate. Surgeons know their rate of infection for various procedures. Don't be afraid to ask for it.

5

Beginning one week before surgery, shower or bathe frequently with chlorhexidine soap. Various brands can be found at drug stores. This will help remove any dangerous bacteria you may be carrying on your own skin.

6

Ask your surgeon to have you tested for *Staphylococcus aureus* at least one week before you come into the hospital. The test is simple, usually just a nasal swab. About one third of people carry Staph on their skin, and if you are one of them, extra precautions can be taken to protect you from infection.

7

Stop smoking well in advance of your surgery. Patients who smoke are three times as likely to develop a surgical site infection as nonsmokers, and have significantly slower recoveries and longer hospital stays.

8

On the day of your operation, remind your doctor that you may need an antibiotic one hour before the first incision. For many types of surgery, a pre-surgical antibiotic is the standard of care, but it is often overlooked by busy hospital staff.

9

Ask your doctor about keeping you warm during surgery. Operating rooms are often cold, but research shows that for many types of surgery, patients who are kept warm resist infection better. This can be done with special blankets, hats and booties, and warmed IV liquids.

10

Do not shave the surgical site. Razors can create small nicks in the skin, through which bacteria can enter. If hair must be removed before surgery, ask that clippers be used instead of a razor.

11

Ask that your surgeon limit the number of personnel in the operating room. Every increase in the number of people adds to your risk of infection.

12

Ask your doctor about monitoring your glucose (sugar) levels continuously during and after surgery, especially if you are having cardiac surgery. The stress of surgery often makes glucose levels spike erratically. When blood glucose levels are tightly controlled, heart patients resist infection better. Continue monitoring even when you are discharged from the hospital because you are not fully healed yet.

13

Avoid a urinary tract catheter if possible. It is a common cause of infection. The tube allows urine to flow from your bladder out of your body. Sometimes catheters are used



when busy hospital staff don't have time to walk patients to the bathroom. If you have a catheter, ask your doctor or nurse often whether it's time to remove it.

14

If you must have an IV, make sure that it is inserted and removed under clean conditions and changed every 3 to 4 days. Your skin should be cleaned at the site of insertion, and the person treating you should be wearing clean gloves. Alert hospital staff immediately if any redness appears.

15

If you are planning to have your baby by Cesarean, take the steps listed above as if you were having any other type of surgery.