

# Infection Prevention at Strong Memorial Hospital

## What is infection prevention?

The term "infection prevention" represents practices which are employed and recommended by health care providers and your family to prevent the spread of germs.

## About germs

We are surrounded by many germs all the time—in our environment at home, at school, in the workplace, and in the hospital. Most of the time, we are not harmed by these germs. However, they can cause illness or infection in people who are sick or more susceptible.

## How are germs spread?

Germs are often found on people's skin, and then in the environment on things such as equipment, bedrails, and bathroom surfaces. They can only be spread if:

- There is a way for the germ to be shared from person to person or from the environment to a person, and
- The germ contacts an area of a person's body (e.g. a wound) where the germ can enter, survive and multiply.

## How do my healthcare providers prevent and control the spread of infections?

Many precautions are taken to help prevent the spread of infection. "Standard Precautions" are used for everyone. This includes hand hygiene and the use of gloves, protective eyewear, and a gown when contact with blood or other body substances is possible. Additional precautions may be taken for specific conditions. When extra precautions are required, your visitors and family will be asked to follow them as well. This may include wearing masks, gowns and/or gloves to enter the room.

Our policies and practices are consistent with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and New York State Department of Health guidelines. We have an Infection Prevention Department staffed by professionals with advanced knowledge and experience in this area.

## Why can infections still occur in health care settings?

Despite precautions, sometimes infections occur in healthcare settings because:

- There are large numbers of sick and often fragile people in a hospital.
- Hospital patients often have wounds or may need tubes inserted for various treatments. This may reduce the effectiveness of the body's normal barriers against infection.

## What can you and your visitors do to help prevent infections?

Everyone has a role to play in preventing infections. The most important thing you can do is to clean your hands thoroughly and frequently.

### Clean your hands:

- After going to the bathroom
- Before eating
- Before and after touching any wound or incision, any dressing you may have, or an IV (intravenous site) if you have one.
- After using tissues when coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After touching body fluids or waste

Take an active part in your care—if you don't know if someone caring for you has cleaned their hands, we want you to feel comfortable asking them to do so.

*Be aware of early signs of infection (redness, swelling, fever) and report them to your health care provider.*

## What kinds of infections may occur in hospitals and other health care settings?

- Pneumonia
- Blood stream infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Wound infections

## Specific infections that you may have heard of include:

- *Clostridium difficile* (Cdiff)
- Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA),
- Vancomycin-resistant *enterococcus* (VRE)

If you have an infection caused by one of these germs, you will be given specific information about it.

## Thank you for helping us prevent infections by:

- Understanding and using good infection prevention practices as described in this brochure.
- Taking an active role in your care and safety. Ask questions if you have any concerns.

**If you have questions or concerns please contact: Infection Prevention - 585-275-7716**

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