MEDLINE UNIVERSITY

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

PREVENTING INFECTION

An infection occurs when microorganisms such as a virus, bacteria, or parasite enters the body. Infections can occur in several ways. These microorganisms may enter your body through a cut or wound in the skin, through the nose or mouth, in the air you breathe, or through bug bites. Preventing the spread of germs is the key to preventing infection (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Wash Your Hands (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2014)

Use soap and warm water. Rub your hands really well for at least 15 seconds. Rub your palms, fingernails, in between your fingers, and the backs of your hands. Or, if your hands do not look dirty, clean them with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Rub the sanitizer all over your hands especially under your nails and between your fingers until your hands are dry. Wash your hands before touching or eating food, wash them after you use the bathroom, take out the trash, change a diaper, visit someone who is ill, or play with a pet.

Make Sure Healthcare Providers Wash Their Hands (Minnesota Department of Health, 2014)

Doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care providers come into contact with lots of bacteria and viruses. So before they treat you, ask them if they've cleaned their hands. Health care providers should wear clean gloves when they perform tasks such as taking throat cultures, pulling teeth, taking blood, touching wounds or body fluids, and examining your mouth or genitalia. Don't be afraid to ask them to wear gloves.

Cover Your Mouth and Nose (Joint Commission, 2012)

Many diseases are spread through sneezes and coughs. When you sneeze or cough, the germs can travel three feet or more; cover your mouth and nose to prevent the spread of infection to others. Keep tissues handy at home, at work, and in your pocket and use them to cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing. Throw away used tissues and clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with the bend of your elbow or hands. If you shield your face with your hands, clean them right away.

Stay Away (Joint Commission, 2012)

If you are sick, avoid close contact with others. Don't shake hands or touch others. When you go for medical treatment, call ahead and ask if there's anything you can do to avoid infecting people in the waiting room.

Get Vaccinated (Joint Commission, 2012)

Vaccinations can help to avoid disease and fight the spread of infection. Make sure that your vaccinations are current, and check with

your doctor about any shots you may need. Vaccinations are available to prevent these diseases:

- Chicken pox
- Mumps
- Measles
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Hepatitis
- Shingles
- Meningitis
- Flu (also known as influenza)
- Whooping cough (also known as Pertussis)

- German measles (also known as Rubella)
- Pneumonia
- Human papillomavirus

Disclaimer:

Medline does not practice medicine, and no information presented on this website is medical advice or intended as a substitute for the advice of a physician. All information on this website concerning medical conditions is from publicly available sources.

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