



10 Tips to Help Prevent Infections

- 1. Wash your hands frequently.** The most effective way to prevent infection is hand-washing. The CDC recommends washing thoroughly and vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, followed by hand-drying with a paper towel. In the absence of running water, an alcohol-based hand gel or wipe will suffice, although nothing beats good ol' soap and water. This takes about as long as it does to sing "Happy Birthday", so some hospitals recommend washing your hands for the duration of this simple tune!
- 2. Don't share personal items.** Toothbrushes, towels, razors, handkerchiefs, and nail clippers can all be sources of infectious agents (bacteria, viruses, and fungi).
- 3. Avoid contact with others who are sick.** Germs can be spread through the air if a person coughs or sneezes for example. When possible, avoid contact with people who are sick to help prevent the spread of infection.
- 4. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** The current recommendation is to cover your mouth with your arm, sleeve, or crook of the elbow, rather than using your hands. Remember to use good hand hygiene and wash or sanitize your hand afterwards.
- 5. Use safe cooking practices.** Bacteria thrive on virtually all food items, and more so on foods left at room temperature. Refrigeration slows or stops the growth of most microbes. Promptly refrigerate foods within 2 hours of preparation. Use separate cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables, keep clean countertops, and wash all fruits and vegetables well prior to eating.
- 6. Try to maintain a healthy diet.** Try to eat a balanced diet. Good nutrition is important to help the body resist infection. Eat foods from all the food groups. Drink plenty of fluids - at least 6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses per day (unless your doctor gives you other guidelines). Water, juices and sports drinks are best.
- 7. Keep your skin healthy.** Take care of all cuts, scrapes and wounds. Your skin provides a protective barrier against bacteria. Keep all cuts and wounds covered. If they are not healing properly, notify your doctor. If your skin is dry or cracking, apply a moisturizing cream to soften skin.
- 8. Try to maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Manage stress levels and try to get eight hours of sleep each night.
- 9. Know if your medication increases your risk of infection.** Some medications can increase your risk of developing an infection. Speak with your doctor or contact your Vital Care Pharmacist if you are unsure of your medication's risk.
- 10. Call your doctor if you experience any of the warning signs of an infection.** Warning signs may include fever (temperature over 101°F), increased fatigue or weakness, yellow- or green-colored mucus for a few examples.



Options for Safe Needle Disposal:

In an effort to decrease community exposure to needles the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **discourages** patients from:

- Throwing loose needles in the garbage
- Flushing used needles down the toilet
- Placing needles in recycling containers

The EPA recognizes that on a national scale states have varying guidelines for the disposal of needles. Variances can even be found on a municipal level where needles are sometimes referred to as Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). As a result, the EPA and Center for Disease Control (CDC) suggest the following resources to determine the appropriate means of disposal in your community:

- ❖ Call your municipality or county refuse department. The number can be found in government pages in your phone book
- ❖ Visit the Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal website at www.safeneedledisposal.org to find out about safe disposal programs near you
- ❖ Visit the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/needledisposal for guidelines and needle disposal programs near you
- ❖ Visit the EPA website for additional needle disposal information as it pertains to your community at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical

Resources for Unused Medication Disposal:

Medication Take-Back Programs:

- Contact city or county government household trash and recycling services

Medication Disposal Information:

- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Website: <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/>
Click on: "Buying & Using Medicine Safely" then "Ensuring Safe Use of Medicine"
Telephone: 888-463-6332 or 301-796-3400
Email: druginfo@fda.hhs.gov
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
Website: <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/>
Click on "Drug Disposal-Got Drugs" in the Quick Links section