



## Standard Precautions At a Glance

**H**andwashing is the most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infection. (You might want to review In the Know's **Handwashing Inservice** and the handwashing policy for your workplace.)

**R**emember that wearing gloves **does not** take the place of handwashing!

**I**f you don't change your gloves in between patients, you may be spreading infections to all your patients.

**T**ake off dirty gloves as soon as possible. Just think how many germs you could spread if you empty a bed pan, then touch the sink, the toilet, the light switch, the doorknob, your pen and clipboard and the patient--with those same dirty gloves!

# Standard Precautions for Bloodborne Transmission

Bloodborne transmission means that a disease is spread when the blood of an infected person reaches the bloodstream of another person. Standard Precautions are what you should do to practice basic infection control against bloodborne diseases. This includes things like washing your hands before and after patient care and wearing gloves when you might come in contact with body fluids.

**STANDARD PRECAUTIONS APPLY TO ALL YOUR PATIENTS, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR DIAGNOSIS--EVEN IF THEY DON'T SEEM SICK!**

***You should use Standard Precautions with every patient and when you have contact with:***

- ◆ Blood.
- ◆ All other body fluids, except sweat--even if you don't **see** blood.
- ◆ Broken skin.
- ◆ Mucous membranes (like the inside of the eyelids, nose or mouth).
- ◆ *Dried* blood and body fluids.

***Standard Precautions include:***

- ◆ Washing your hands after you touch blood, body fluids or contaminated items--even if you were wearing gloves!
- ◆ Washing your hands whenever you remove a pair of gloves.
- ◆ Washing your hands between patients.
- ◆ Wearing gloves whenever you touch blood, body fluids or contaminated items.
- ◆ Putting on clean gloves before you touch a patient's broken skin or mucous membranes.
- ◆ Changing gloves between tasks and between patients.
- ◆ Wearing a gown if needed to protect your skin and clothing from getting splashed with blood or body fluids.
- ◆ Wearing a waterproof gown if you are likely to be heavily splashed with body fluids.
- ◆ Removing a dirty gown as soon as possible and then washing your hands.
- ◆ Wearing a mask and eye protection to protect your mucous membranes if you might get splashed by blood or body fluids.
- ◆ Helping to keep your work environment as clean as possible by cleaning up spills and patient care areas promptly.

**Diseases caused by Bloodborne Transmission include:  
HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C**



# Standard Precaution Do's and Don'ts

As you go about your busy work day, keep these infection control tips in mind!

## DO:

- Wash your hands after you remove your gloves.
- Use the soap recommended for handwashing in your workplace. If you are allergic to it, let your supervisor know.
- Put on clean gloves right before you touch a patient's broken skin or mucous membranes to avoid infecting those areas.
- Remember that bloodborne diseases can be spread in blood and in other body fluids (like urine), body secretions (like saliva) and body excretions (like stool).
- Keep in mind that gloves are worn to protect the patient **and** you (especially if you have any cuts or broken skin on your hands). Check your gloves as you work and change them immediately if you see they are torn.
- Ask your supervisor if you're not sure which precautions are necessary for a specific patient.



## DON'T:

- Forget that a patient does not have to look or act sick to be sick. Protect yourself with standard precautions every day with every patient.
- Use a surgical mask to protect yourself against tuberculosis. It will not work!
- Rub your eyes or nose during patient care. You don't want to expose your mucous membranes to unwanted infections.
- Contaminate your hands by removing your gloves improperly.
- Wear a patient-type gown as a barrier. If you think you might be splashed with blood or other body fluids, wear a thick "paper" or plastic gown to prevent soak-through.
- Participate in a resuscitation of a patient without using a CPR mask.
- Be shy about reminding your coworkers to use standard precautions. If they don't, they could spread germs to you!

## Basic Infection Control Tips!

- The key to washing your hands is *not* the kind of soap or the temperature of the water. It's the energy you put into scrubbing your hands. *Friction* gets rid of bacteria—not soap.



- Teach your clients to ask you if you have washed your hands. (*They should also ask everyone else who works with them.*) And, then, when they do ask you, don't get defensive. Just be grateful for the reminder!
- Gloves should be worn to protect your hands from becoming contaminated with blood or body fluids. Wear gloves when you:
  - Perform tasks that you think might involve blood or body fluids.
  - Touch equipment that may have been contaminated by blood or body fluids.
  - Have cuts, scratches or other breaks in the skin of your hands.
- Remember that gloves primarily protect you—not the client. If you have dirty hands when you pick up a pair of gloves, you'll contaminate them—and your client. It's important to wash your hands *before* you put on gloves!



- Don't rub your eyes or nose during client care. You don't want to expose your mucous membranes to unwanted infections.

- Never shake dirty linens. Instead, roll them up, hold them away from your body and place them in a hamper or bag for cleaning.
- Remember that you can't catch TB from handling the dishes, clothing or linens of a client with TB. Tuberculosis is spread through the air, not by touching things.
- Keep in mind that you can't catch HIV by hugging or shaking hands with someone. Don't be afraid to touch a client who is HIV positive.
- Consider getting the vaccine injections for hepatitis B (if you haven't had them already). That way, if you happen to be positive for hepatitis C, you won't have to worry about doing additional damage to your liver with hepatitis B.
- Be sure to have your TB skin test and/or your chest x-ray on schedule. Getting tested on time could make a difference to you, your clients, your coworkers and your family.
- Help your clients understand how diseases are spread so that they can participate in proper infection control practices, too.
- The single most important thing you can do to help control the spread of infection—including *drug resistant diseases*—is to **wash your hands!!**



# Even More Infection Control Tips



- Keeping your clients' skin clean, dry and intact will go a long way toward preventing infections. (The skin is the body's first line of defense against germs.)
- Remember that some favorite areas for bacteria are places that are warm and moist—like the face, neck, armpits and genital area. Make sure your clients wash these areas with soap and water...and dry them carefully before getting dressed.
- The key to washing your hands is *not* the kind of soap or the temperature of the water. It's the energy you put into *scrubbing* your hands. Friction gets rid of bacteria, not soap.
- To really clean your hands, you need to scrub them for at least 30 seconds. Studies have shown that most health care workers only wash their hands for 10 seconds! Take your time and do it right.
- Studies have found that up to 75% of health care workers don't wash their hands between patients. Don't be one of them!! Wash your hands according to your workplace policy.
- Teach your clients to ask you if you have washed your hands. (*They should also ask everyone else who works with them.*) And, then, when they do ask you, don't get defensive. Just be grateful for the reminder!
- Remember that gloves primarily protect you—not the client. If you have dirty hands when you pick up a pair of gloves, you'll contaminate them—and your client. It's important to wash your hands *before* you put on gloves!
- Follow your workplace policy for cleaning any equipment you use for more than one client—like a stethoscope. Infection control officials recommend swabbing stethoscopes with alcohol after each use to prevent spreading germs. (*Keep this in mind...one study of 200 stethoscopes used in four different hospitals found that 160 of them were contaminated with harmful bacteria!*)



## Learn...

*Did you know that in the early 1800's, many surgeons wore their regular clothes while they operated? Others wore long coats that they didn't bother to wash in between operations. In fact, surgeons with a lot of blood stains on their coats were proud—since it showed they had lots of surgical experience!*



*The first bar of soap was made in 600 B.C. by boiling goat fat in water and adding ash.*



*In the Middle Ages, people didn't take many baths. Most people thought that bathing once a year was enough. Others believed that bathing was dangerous...and could even be fatal!*



Remember...

*The single most important thing you can do to help control the spread of drug-resistant bacteria is to wash your hands!*

For your own safety, follow your workplace procedure for handwashing.

**The safety of your clients, your coworkers and your family depends on it, too!**

## Proper Handwashing is Only Five Steps Away!

Since you deal with many different clients everyday, it is extremely important to keep your hands clean. Even by touching a doorknob or a telephone, you can pick up and pass on thousands of different germs. Here are the five suggested steps to follow to properly wash your hands, whether you are at home or at the workplace.



1. Begin by wetting each hand thoroughly. **Use an antibacterial soap.** It can be in either a liquid form or a bar of soap. If using a bar of soap, make sure that it is placed on a clean rack when you are finished. All water will drain off the soap and keep it free from germs.
2. Once you have applied soap, **rub your hands together** making sure you don't miss any spots. Scrub all surfaces, including in between each finger.
3. **Resume scrubbing each hand for 15 seconds.** Do not rub so hard that your skin becomes irritated, as this can lead to certain skin conditions.

**One out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom!**

4. **Rinse both hands well** in warm, but not scalding, water. There are studies proving that very warm water can do a lot of harm to your skin, and even add to infection!
5. **Dry hands thoroughly.** As paper or cloths towels work, the best way to dry is by using a motion activated dryer. These dryers are touch free, which means less infection!

## How Do Dirty Hands Contribute to Sickness?

- The easiest way germs are transferred is by coughing or sneezing into your hands and rubbing your eyes, nose, or mouth. Many times, people don't realize they are at risk. **Only thirty percent of people wash their hands after sneezing or coughing!** No wonder so many people get sick every year.
- Another way germs are transferred is through food. It is extremely important to wash your hands before and while you are cooking for a client. If unclean hands touch food, germs are immediately transferred to that food, and then to your client.
- Bacteria also thrives on toilets, doorknobs, railings, sinks, and other commonly used objects. Think about all of the objects you touch before visiting a client. Now, think about caring for your client without washing your hands. (Even if you wear gloves all day long, your clients are still at risk for developing an infectious disease.)

## When Should You Wash Your Hands?

Germs are invisible to the eye, and because of this, not many people think about washing their hands throughout the day. Here are a few times when it is **absolutely necessary** to wash your hands thoroughly:

- After lengthy contact with any client.
- Before and after situations in which your hands are likely to be contaminated, including bathroom breaks, your lunch break, and before and after your workday.
- After touching contaminated items such as urine-measuring devices.
- After gloves are removed (since the gloves may have a hole). Bacteria multiplies quickly when your hands are inside gloves.
- If a client asks you to wash your hands, do so, and don't be offended. People are learning more about handwashing and preventing infections.
- Whenever you are preparing food for a client.
- If a client has pets, wash your hands frequently while visiting. Many animals leave invisible germs all around the house that go completely unnoticed!
- If someone in your family is sick, keep your hands as clean as possible all day long, so you don't pass on germs to your clients.
- After sneezing or coughing. Even if you use a tissue when you sneeze, germs can still seep onto your hands.
- When you arrive to see a client, and once again when you leave.
- Before and after you put on gloves.



## Are Some Soaps Better Than Others?

*There are three main types of sanitizers used for hands, some are better than others. Keep reading to learn which types you should use!*

- **Antimicrobial Soap:** This type of soap not only removes the dirt and residue from your skin, but also uses an agent that kills microorganisms. Sometimes, the agents that are used in the soap continue to kill microorganisms even after your hands are dry!



- **Plain Soap:** Although plain soap gets rid of surface residue, it does not have the power to kill microorganisms that are on the skin. It can "suspend" the microorganisms from infecting, but it can't kill them.
- **Antiseptic Handrubs:** These types of disinfectants are water free and consist of a "gel" that decreases the number of microorganisms on your skin. Always use soap and water when you can.