



# Infection Control Information for Family/Visitors



How can you help prevent  
infection?

2015

# BACKGROUND

Patients in a hospital are easy targets to get an infection.

Our hospital is part of the wider community where we all mingle with each other. This makes it easy for infections to spread. Community infections may be brought in by staff, visitors and volunteers, particularly during community epidemics of respiratory and stomach infections.

## **Infection Control is Everyone's Business!**



## **What this booklet hopes to achieve.**

STEGH staff is aware of the need to prevent infections in patients. All of our staff are trained in infection control precautions.

People who visit STEGH also play an important role in preventing the spread of infections.



This booklet provides basic information to assist you in keeping your relative/friend free of infections.

**We need your help to prevent infections in your loved ones!**

## Common infection risks in hospitals

- Germs which cause hospital infections can be spread by the unclean hands of staff, wandering patients or visitors.
- Respiratory viruses starting in the community, and these viruses get on staff or visitor hands during coughing or nose blowing, like influenza.
- Stomach viruses starting in the community, spread by staff or visitor hands that have not been cleaned.

Hospitals can set up patients for getting an infection so we take prevention very seriously.



**The next pages sum up what should be done to stop the spread of infection here.**

## CLEAN YOUR HANDS:

- Upon arrival and departure from STEGH
- before and after leaving patient room.

**Rub** alcohol hand rub briskly and completely over each hand until dry.



OR

**Wash** your hands with soap and water if they become visibly soiled during contact with the patient whom you are visiting.



# PREVENT THE SPREAD OF RESPIRATORY GERMS

*Stop the spread of germs that can make you and others sick!*

*Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.*

*Put your used tissue in the waste basket.*

*If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.*





**Please don't come to visit if you are ill!**

It is no favour to ANYONE if you visit while you are ill, or bring a child who is ill, to visit.

It is much better to send your relative a message than bring germs which may make them very ill!



## **UNDERSTANDING “ISOLATION”**

Some patients may pick up germs that are resistant to multiple antibiotics. These germs can then spread to other patients.

One way to stop the spread of germs is to separate patients who have serious infections from other patients. ‘Isolation’ is designed to provide a way to stop this.

If your relative’s room displays an isolation sign, please follow the instructions on the sign.

Visitors can still visit, but will be required to wear protective clothing as posted on the isolation sign, or as requested by staff. Ask a staff member to show you how to correctly put on and take off the protective clothing. Always remove this clothing when leaving the room.

Small children and persons who easily acquire an infection should not visit while isolation precautions are in place. You may speak to a nurse who can help you make this decision.



## **DO Not be a ‘Good Samaritan’**

Sometimes roommates of the isolated person you are visiting will ask you for help.

**What you need to know is....**

**Even though you may live with the patient and been already exposed to their infection without mishap, it can still be spread to other vulnerable patients.**

Germs have no boundaries. Germs readily live on surfaces around a patient’s bed or on a patient.

By touching the roommate or anything (including their curtain!) within their bed space, you can transfer those germs to your own hands or clothing. After touching the patient or anything around his bed area, the germs transfer to those surfaces.





We want you to be safe. We want our patients to be safe. So please do not help a roommate but preferably ask a nurse to intervene.



**“Musical chairs”  
visiting is not a  
good thing!**

Many kind visitors visit a number of patients to “cheer them up”, particularly if some of them have few visitors.

Visitors who move from one patient to another, touching their equipment, can spread germs to other patients as they move between them.

Please limit your visit to one patient at a time.  
Clean your hands after any contact with patients.

## **OUTBREAKS**

An outbreak occurs when several patients contract the same infection over a short period of time while staying on the same unit.

Most outbreaks start in the community, but spread easily in hospitals due to the patient's illness making them easy targets.

Staff work hard to prevent spread within STEGH during outbreaks.

We will have to ask you to follow instructions as posted on outbreak signs. It is sometimes wise to delay your visit until the outbreak is over. You can instead contact the patient by phone. If you have to visit, check in with the nurse first before your visit. He or she will advise you how to keep yourself safe during the visit.

# PREVENTION OF STOMACH ILLNESSES

## Safety of food brought in by relatives

Patients may get ill when exposed to certain foods and its effects can be quite serious.

### Germs in food

- May be in food when purchased.
- May be introduced during food preparation.
- Can occur by lack of adequate cooking temperatures needed to destroy germs in food.
- Can occur by lack of refrigeration in storage or transport.

Please ask the nurse before giving the patient any food from home. If brought in food is being stored in a hospital refrigerator, label the food with patient's name and date it. If the food has been stored for a long time, the hospital will dispose of it if they think it is harmful for the patient to eat. Always ask the nurse before you use a hospital fridge and clean your hands.

# PREVENTION OF PNEUMONIA WHILE IN HOSPITAL

One of the most common things staff try to prevent patients from getting while in hospital is pneumonia.

There are two factors that can lead to the development of pneumonia. These are:

- Swallowing difficulties – which allow food to accidentally enter the respiratory passages.
- Prolonged bed rest can lead to pneumonia. Inadequate mouth and teeth/denture care which allows the build-up of germs on teeth/dentures.

**There are several things you can do to help the patient from getting pneumonia.**

## **Special Diet**

Patients with swallowing difficulties may be prescribed a special diet to assist with safe swallowing. This diet includes smooth pureed, soft foods and thickened fluids to help with easier swallowing. **Patients on these diets should not drink ordinary thin fluids and should eat only the food prepared by the hospital.**

**Please check with the nursing staff before you bring food in for the patient.**

**If 'cleared' to help feed your relative, here are safe swallowing tips when feeding your relative:**

1. Ensure your relative is always sitting upright for any meals or drinks, and that their head is slightly forward. You may need to ask for a pillow to support their head.
2. Do not give food or drinks if your relative is drowsy.
3. Do not rush when feeding your relative and watch that they swallow each mouthful before giving the next spoonful of food.
4. If suggested, give small mouthfuls of food at a time or small sips of drink.
5. When feeding your relative, sit at eye level.
6. Alternating food and drink is recommended, as the fluid may help to clear pocketed food from the mouth.
7. Your relative should remain sitting upright for 30 minutes after meal.
8. Ensure the patient's mouth is clear before starting to feed them.
9. Complete mouth care with a tooth brush and paste after eating.

## PROTECTIVE IMMUNIZATION

Influenza can be a “killer” of patients as can the pneumonia that may develop after a bout with the flu. Think about getting a flu shot if you have a relative in the hospital during the fall or winter.

Patients should also receive a special vaccine that protects against a serious type of pneumonia. It is called Pneumococcal vaccine.

Every flu season we offer flu shots to patients before they are discharged from the hospital or on transfer to our Continuing Complex Care Centre.

If you are the next of kin for the patient you may be asked to consent to this on behalf of the patient.





**My questions to ask staff:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---