



nile's project

A coalition to eliminate unnecessary deaths from MRSA, VRE, Staph and other preventable hospital acquired infections.

visit: nilesproject.com

For further information on hospital acquired infections, their effect on our lives and how to protect your family, please visit:

www.hospitalinfection.org



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A Pocket Guide

15 Steps

you can take to
reduce your risk
of getting a
hospital infection

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You and your family deserve clean, safe care. Ask for it.

- 1 Ask that hospital staff clean their hands before treating you and ask visitors to clean their hands. If you're worried about being too aggressive, just remember your life could be at stake. Don't be falsely assured by gloves. If caregivers have pulled on gloves without cleaning their hands first, the gloves are already contaminated before they touch you.
- 2 Before your doctor uses a stethoscope ask that the diaphragm (the flat surface) be wiped with alcohol. Stethoscopes and other equipment are often contaminated with dangerous bacteria.
- 3 If you need a "central line" catheter, ask your doctor about the benefits of one that is antibiotic-impregnated or antiseptic-coated to reduce infections.
- 4 If you need surgery, choose a surgeon with a low infection rate. Surgeons know their rate of infection for various procedures. Don't be afraid to ask.
- 5 Beginning 3 to 5 days before surgery, shower or bathe daily with chlorhexidine soap. It can be bought without a prescription and will help remove dangerous bacteria you may be carrying on your own skin.
- 6 Ask your surgeon to have you tested for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) at least one week before coming to the hospital. The test is simple, usually just a nasal swab. If you have it, extra precautions can be taken to protect you from infection.
- 7 Stop smoking well in advance of your surgery. Patients who smoke are 3 times as likely to develop a surgical site infection as nonsmokers.
- 8 On the day of your operation, remind your doctor that you may need an antibiotic one hour before the first incision. For many types of surgery, a pre-surgery antibiotic is the standard of care, but is often overlooked by busy hospital staff.
- 9 Ask your doctor about keeping you warm during surgery. For many types of surgery, patients who are kept warm resist infection better. This can be done with special blankets, warmed IV liquids, hats and booties. After surgery, when it's time to try walking, request clean booties before getting back into bed. Do not track bacteria from floor into your sheets.
- 10 Do not shave the surgical site. Razors can create small nicks in the skin, through which bacteria can enter. If necessary, ask that clippers be used.
- 11 Wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your hands to your mouth, and do not set food or utensils on furniture or bed sheets. Germs such as "C.Diff" can live for many days on surfaces and can cause infections if they get into your mouth.
- 12 Ask your doctor about monitoring your glucose (sugar) levels continuously during and after surgery, especially if you are having cardiac surgery.
- 13 Avoid a urinary tract catheter if possible. A common cause of infection. If you have a catheter, ask your caregiver to remove it as soon as possible.
- 14 If you must have an IV, make sure that it's inserted and removed under clean conditions and changed every 3 to 4 days. Alert hospital staff immediately if any redness appears.
- 15 If you are planning to have your baby by Cesarean, take the steps listed above.

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