



10 TIPS TO HELP PREVENT INFECTIONS: Patient Education

- 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 ole' 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 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 countertops clean, 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 food 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 moisturizing cream to soften skin.
- 8. TRY TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.** Manage stress levels and try to get 8 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 Rx 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 to name a few.

