

Frequently Asked Questions about...

Contact Precautions (for patients, family members, and visitors)

Q. What are contact precautions and when are they used?

A. The term “contact precautions” means that everyone coming into a patient’s room is asked to wear a gown and gloves.

Contact precautions are used when a person has a type of bacteria or virus on the skin or in a sore, or elsewhere in the body, such as the intestine, that can be transmitted to someone else if that person touches the infected individual or contaminated surfaces or equipment near the infected individual.

Q. What kind of infections can be spread by contact?

A. Examples of bacteria and viruses that can be transmitted to others include methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), *Salmonella*, *Clostridium difficile*, and some of the hepatitis viruses.

Q. What should the care providers be doing?

A. Your care providers should be wearing a gown and gloves whenever they are in the room. They should be putting the gown and gloves on as they enter the room, and removing the gown and gloves as they leave the room. They should also be washing their hands before they put on the gown and gloves when they come into the room, and as they leave the room. The people who come in to clean the room and provide other services should also be wearing a gown and gloves.

Q. If I am the patient, what should I do?

A. You should follow instructions from your care provider. You may be asked to stay in your room. If you are told that you can leave your room for activities, you may be asked not to visit other patients in their rooms, and you will be reminded to wash your hand frequently. If you are carrying a type of virus or bacterium that can be transmitted to other people in food, you will be asked not to touch any food that will be eaten by anyone else.

If your physician prescribes medication (an antibiotic or antiviral drug), you should take it as prescribed until all the medicine is gone or your doctor tells you to stop taking it. If you have questions you should ask your care providers, the facility manager, or your physician.

Q. If I am a family member or other visitor, what should I do?

A. People who visit patients on contact precautions should follow facility employee instructions. You will usually be asked to wear a gown and gloves when you are in the patient’s room and must wash your hands before and after the visit.