

## Frequently Asked Questions about...

# Standard Precautions (for patients, family members and visitors)

### Q. What are standard precautions?

- A. "Standard precautions" are a set of basic steps care providers use to protect their patients and themselves from infection. These basic steps include, but are not limited to:
- 1) Practicing appropriate **hand hygiene** before and after contact with a patient, after contact with the surfaces or objects around the patient, and after removing gloves (if used).
  - 2) Wearing **disposable gloves** when the care provider may have contact with blood, feces, urine, or any other body fluids.
  - 3) Wearing a **gown** to prevent contamination of the provider's clothing with blood or body fluids.
  - 4) Using a **face mask, face shield, and/or goggles** if splashing of blood or body fluids might occur.
  - 5) **Cleaning of care equipment** between patients.

### Q. Why is it very important that care providers always use standard precautions?

- A. Everyone carries some germs on and in their bodies, and most people don't even realize it. Many of the germs do not make most healthy people sick. However, patients in healthcare facilities are more likely to have germs that can make other people sick, and are more likely to become sick than other people. When care providers use standard precautions for every patient, every day, every time, they can be sure the germs (bacteria and viruses) they may pick up on their hands or clothing while caring for one patient are not carried to another patient.

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

- A. As a patient, there are many things you can do to prevent the spread of infection:
- Wash your hands before eating and after using the bathroom.
  - If you have open sores, keep them covered, if possible. Try not to touch any open sores or draining areas, and wash your hands frequently.
  - If you cough or sneeze, cough into your shirt sleeve or a tissue. Throw away used tissues in a trash can and wash your hands immediately.
  - Don't share your personal items (towels, nail clippers) with other patients.
  - Remind your care providers to wash their hands.
  - If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic for an infection, take the antibiotic exactly as prescribed until all the medicine is gone or your doctor tells you to stop taking it.
  - Follow other instructions from your care providers. If you are asked to stay in your room because you or others in your facility are sick, please do as you are asked.

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

- A. As a family member or visitor, there are many things you can do to prevent the spread of infection:
- Always wash your hands before entering the patient's room and immediately after leaving the room. If you are not sure where the hand wash sink is located, ask an employee.
  - If you will be providing hands-on care for the person (bathing or feeding), ask the nurse if you should be wearing gloves or a gown. Ask how to dispose of gloves or gowns if you use them.
  - Ask the nurse or unit administrator if you have other questions.
  - Do **not** visit if you are sick.