

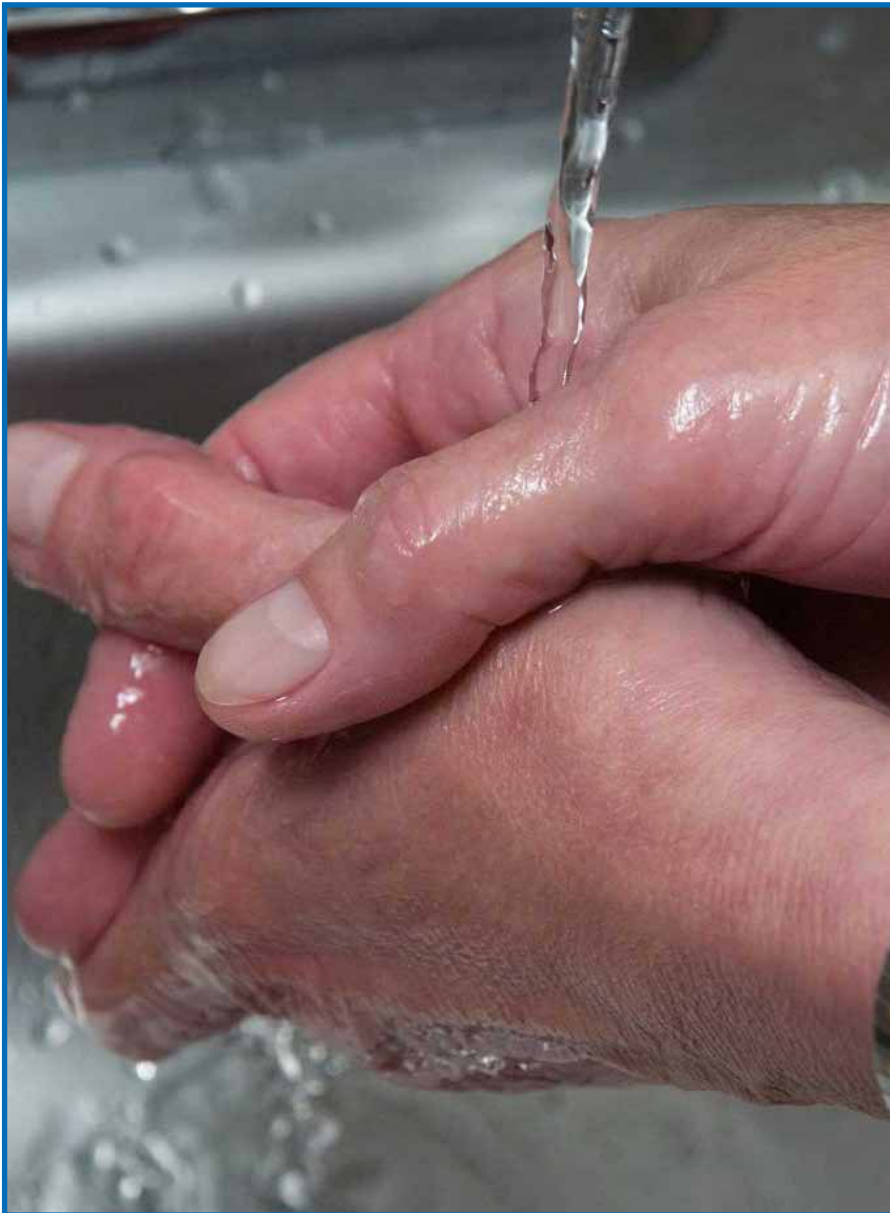
**HOSPITAL  
FOR  
SPECIAL  
SURGERY**

**WHERE THE  
WORLD COMES  
TO GET BACK  
IN THE GAME**

---

# **Infection Prevention**

---



**HOSPITAL  
FOR  
SPECIAL  
SURGERY**

**WHERE THE  
WORLD COMES  
TO GET BACK  
IN THE GAME**

Dear HSS Patient:

The Hospital for Special Surgery is committed to patient safety and quality patient care and is proud to have achieved one of the lowest infection rates in New York State. We are pleased to promote patient education as directed by the Centers for Disease Control and Joint Commission to promote patient safety and prevent infection. Therefore, enclosed in your packet you will find information regarding the prevention of:

- 5 Things You Can Do To Prevent Infection (Speak up)
- Surgical Site Infections
- Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infection
- Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) and Multiple Drug Resistant Organisms (MDRO)
- Catheter- Associated Bloodstream Infections
- Ventilator Associated Pneumonia
- Hepatitis C
- HIV

This information is suggested for your information and review and to highlight some of the ways we prevent infection at Hospital for Special Surgery. As always, if you have any concerns about your health you should contact your physician. Please feel free to contact the HSS Infection Control Department 212.606.1235 if you have any additional questions or concerns regarding the infection prevention information in your packet.

# SpeakUP™

## 5 Five Things You Can Do To Prevent Infection

### Five Things You Can Do To Prevent Infection is supported by

American Hospital Association  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc.  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
The Joint Commission  
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.



Helping health care organizations help patients

## 1.

### Clean your hands.

- Use soap and warm water. Rub your hands really well for at least 15 seconds. Rub your palms, fingernails, in between your fingers, and the backs of your hands.
- Or, if your hands do not look dirty, clean them with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Rub the sanitizer all over your hands, especially under your nails and between your fingers, until your hands are dry.
- Clean your hands before touching or eating food. Clean them after you use the bathroom, take out the trash, change a diaper, visit someone who is ill, or play with a pet.



## 2.

### Make sure health care providers clean their hands or wear gloves.

- Doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care providers come into contact with lots of bacteria and viruses. So before they treat you, ask them if they've cleaned their hands.
- Health care providers should wear clean gloves when they perform tasks such as taking throat cultures, pulling teeth, taking blood, touching wounds or body fluids, and examining your mouth or private parts. Don't be afraid to ask them if they should wear gloves.



## 3.

### Cover your mouth and nose.

Many diseases are spread through sneezes and coughs. When you sneeze or cough, the germs can travel 3 feet or more! Cover your mouth and nose to prevent the spread of infection to others.

- Use a tissue! Keep tissues handy at home, at work and in your pocket. Be sure to throw away used tissues and clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- If you don't have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with the bend of your elbow or hands. If you use your hands, clean them right away.



## 4.

### If you are sick, avoid close contact with others.

- If you are sick, stay away from other people or stay home. Don't shake hands or touch others.
- When you go for medical treatment, call ahead and ask if there's anything you can do to avoid infecting people in the waiting room.



## 5.

### Get shots to avoid disease and fight the spread of infection.

Make sure that your vaccinations are current—even for adults. Check with your doctor about shots you may need. Vaccinations are available to prevent these diseases:

- Chicken pox
- Measles
- Tetanus
- Shingles
- Flu (also known as influenza)
- Whooping cough (also known as Pertussis)
- German measles (also known as Rubella)
- Pneumonia (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Mumps
- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis
- Meningitis



# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

## about “Surgical Site Infections”

### *What is a Surgical Site Infection (SSI)?*

A surgical site infection is an infection that occurs after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place. Most patients who have surgery do not develop an infection. However, infections develop in about 1 to 3 out of every 100 patients who have surgery.

Some of the common symptoms of a surgical site infection are:

- Redness and pain around the area where you had surgery
- Drainage of cloudy fluid from your surgical wound
- Fever

### *Can SSIs be treated?*

Yes. Most surgical site infections can be treated with antibiotics. The antibiotic given to you depends on the bacteria (germs) causing the infection. Sometimes patients with SSIs also need another surgery to treat the infection.

### *What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent SSIs?*

To prevent SSIs, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- Clean their hands and arms up to their elbows with an antiseptic agent just before the surgery.
- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for each patient.
- May remove some of your hair immediately before your surgery using electric clippers if the hair is in the same area where the procedure will occur. They should not shave you with a razor.
- Wear special hair covers, masks, gowns, and gloves during surgery to keep the surgery area clean.
- Give you antibiotics before your surgery starts. In most cases, you should get antibiotics within 60 minutes before the surgery starts and the antibiotics should be stopped within 24 hours after surgery.
- Clean the skin at the site of your surgery with a special soap that kills germs.

### *What can I do to help prevent SSIs?*

#### **Before your surgery:**

- Tell your doctor about other medical problems you may have. Health problems such as allergies, diabetes, and obesity could affect your surgery and your treatment.

- Quit smoking. Patients who smoke get more infections. Talk to your doctor about how you can quit before your surgery.
- Do not shave near where you will have surgery. Shaving with a razor can irritate your skin and make it easier to develop an infection.

#### **At the time of your surgery:**

- Speak up if someone tries to shave you with a razor before surgery. Ask why you need to be shaved and talk with your surgeon if you have any concerns.
- Ask if you will get antibiotics before surgery.

#### **After your surgery:**

- Make sure that your healthcare providers clean their hands before examining you, either with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

**If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.**

- Family and friends who visit you should not touch the surgical wound or dressings.
- Family and friends should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after visiting you. If you do not see them clean their hands, ask them to clean their hands.

### *What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?*

- Before you go home, your doctor or nurse should explain everything you need to know about taking care of your wound. Make sure you understand how to care for your wound before you leave the hospital.
- Always clean your hands before and after caring for your wound.
- Before you go home, make sure you know who to contact if you have questions or problems after you get home.
- If you have any symptoms of an infection, such as redness and pain at the surgery site, drainage, or fever, call your doctor immediately.

**If you have additional questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.**

Co-sponsored by:



# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

## about “Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infection”

### *What is “catheter-associated urinary tract infection”?*

A urinary tract infection (also called “UTI”) is an infection in the urinary system, which includes the bladder (which stores the urine) and the kidneys (which filter the blood to make urine). Germs (for example, bacteria or yeasts) do not normally live in these areas; but if germs are introduced, an infection can occur.

If you have a urinary catheter, germs can travel along the catheter and cause an infection in your bladder or your kidney; in that case it is called a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (or “CA-UTI”).

### *What is a urinary catheter?*

A urinary catheter is a thin tube placed in the bladder to drain urine. Urine drains through the tube into a bag that collects the urine. A urinary catheter may be used:

- If you are not able to urinate on your own
- To measure the amount of urine that you make, for example, during intensive care
- During and after some types of surgery
- During some tests of the kidneys and bladder

People with urinary catheters have a much higher chance of getting a urinary tract infection than people who don’t have a catheter.

### *How do I get a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CA-UTI)?*

If germs enter the urinary tract, they may cause an infection. Many of the germs that cause a catheter-associated urinary tract infection are common germs found in your intestines that do not usually cause an infection there. Germs can enter the urinary tract when the catheter is being put in or while the catheter remains in the bladder.

### *What are the symptoms of a urinary tract infection?*

Some of the common symptoms of a urinary tract infection are:

- Burning or pain in the lower abdomen (that is, below the stomach)
- Fever
- Bloody urine may be a sign of infection, but is also caused by other problems
- Burning during urination or an increase in the frequency of urination after the catheter is removed.

Sometimes people with catheter-associated urinary tract infections do not have these symptoms of infection.

### *Can catheter-associated urinary tract infections be treated?*

Yes, most catheter-associated urinary tract infections can be treated with antibiotics and removal or change of the catheter. Your doctor will determine which antibiotic is best for you.

### *What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent catheter-associated urinary tract infections?*

To prevent urinary tract infections, doctors and nurses take the following actions.

### **Catheter insertion**

- o Catheters are put in only when necessary and they are removed as soon as possible.
- o Only properly trained persons insert catheters using sterile (“clean”) technique.
- o The skin in the area where the catheter will be inserted is cleaned before inserting the catheter.
- o Other methods to drain the urine are sometimes used, such as
- External catheters in men (these look like condoms and are placed over the penis rather than into the penis)
- Putting a temporary catheter in to drain the urine and removing it right away. This is called intermittent urethral catheterization.

### **Catheter care**

- o Healthcare providers clean their hands by washing them with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching your catheter.

If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

- o Avoid disconnecting the catheter and drain tube. This helps to prevent germs from getting into the catheter tube.
- o The catheter is secured to the leg to prevent pulling on the catheter.
- o Avoid twisting or kinking the catheter.
- o Keep the bag lower than the bladder to prevent urine from backflowing to the bladder.
- o Empty the bag regularly. The drainage spout should not touch anything while emptying the bag.

### *What can I do to help prevent catheter-associated urinary tract infections if I have a catheter?*

- Always clean your hands before and after doing catheter care.
- Always keep your urine bag below the level of your bladder.
- Do not tug or pull on the tubing.
- Do not twist or kink the catheter tubing.
- Ask your healthcare provider each day if you still need the catheter.

### *What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?*

- If you will be going home with a catheter, your doctor or nurse should explain everything you need to know about taking care of the catheter. Make sure you understand how to care for it before you leave the hospital.
- If you develop any of the symptoms of a urinary tract infection, such as burning or pain in the lower abdomen, fever, or an increase in the frequency of urination, contact your doctor or nurse immediately.
- Before you go home, make sure you know who to contact if you have questions or problems after you get home.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Co-sponsored by:



# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

## about "MRSA"

(Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

### What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* (pronounced staff-ill-oh-KOK-us AW-ree-us), or "Staph" is a very common germ that about 1 out of every 3 people have on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause any problems for most people who have it on their skin. But sometimes it can cause serious infections such as skin or wound infections, pneumonia, or infections of the blood.

Antibiotics are given to kill Staph germs when they cause infections. Some Staph are resistant, meaning they cannot be killed by some antibiotics. "Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*" or "MRSA" is a type of Staph that is resistant to some of the antibiotics that are often used to treat Staph infections.

### Who is most likely to get an MRSA infection?

In the hospital, people who are more likely to get an MRSA infection are people who:

- have other health conditions making them sick
- have been in the hospital or a nursing home
- have been treated with antibiotics.

People who are healthy and who have not been in the hospital or a nursing home can also get MRSA infections. These infections usually involve the skin. More information about this type of MRSA infection, known as "community-associated MRSA" infection, is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa>

### How do I get an MRSA infection?

People who have MRSA germs on their skin or who are infected with MRSA may be able to spread the germ to other people. MRSA can be passed on to bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. It can spread to other people on contaminated equipment and on the hands of doctors, nurses, other healthcare providers and visitors.

### Can MRSA infections be treated?

Yes, there are antibiotics that can kill MRSA germs. Some patients with MRSA abscesses may need surgery to drain the infection. Your healthcare provider will determine which treatments are best for you.

### What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent MRSA infections?

To prevent MRSA infections, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- Carefully **clean hospital rooms and medical equipment**.
- Use **Contact Precautions** when caring for patients with MRSA. Contact Precautions mean:
  - o Whenever possible, patients with MRSA will have a single room or will share a room only with someone else who also has MRSA.
  - o Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with MRSA.

- o Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves.
- o When leaving the room, hospital providers and visitors remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands.
- o Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas, such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They may go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.

- **May test** some patients to see if they have MRSA on their skin. This test involves rubbing a cotton-tipped swab in the patient's nostrils or on the skin.

### What can I do to help prevent MRSA infections?

#### In the hospital

- Make sure that all doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for you.

If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

#### When you go home

- If you have wounds or an intravascular device (such as a catheter or dialysis port) make sure that you know how to take care of them.

### Can my friends and family get MRSA when they visit me?

The chance of getting MRSA while visiting a person who has MRSA is very low. To decrease the chance of getting MRSA your family and friends should:

- Clean their hands before they enter your room and when they leave.
- Ask a healthcare provider if they need to wear protective gowns and gloves when they visit you.

### What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?

To prevent another MRSA infection and to prevent spreading MRSA to others:

- Keep taking any antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. Don't take half-doses or stop before you complete your prescribed course.
- Clean your hands often, especially before and after changing your wound dressing or bandage.
- People who live with you should clean their hands often as well.
- Keep any wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Wash and dry your clothes and bed linens in the warmest temperatures recommended on the labels.
- Tell your healthcare providers that you have MRSA. This includes home health nurses and aides, therapists, and personnel in doctors' offices.
- Your doctor may have more instructions for you.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Co-sponsored by:



# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

about

## “Catheter-Associated Bloodstream Infections”

(also known as “Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infections”)

### *What is a catheter-associated bloodstream infection?*

A “central line” or “central catheter” is a tube that is placed into a patient’s large vein, usually in the neck, chest, arm, or groin. The catheter is often used to draw blood, or give fluids or medications. It may be left in place for several weeks. A bloodstream infection can occur when bacteria or other germs travel down a “central line” and enter the blood. If you develop a catheter-associated bloodstream infection you may become ill with fevers and chills or the skin around the catheter may become sore and red.

### *Can a catheter-related bloodstream infection be treated?*

A catheter-associated bloodstream infection is serious, but often can be successfully treated with antibiotics. The catheter might need to be removed if you develop an infection.

### *What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent catheter-associated bloodstream infections?*

To prevent catheter-associated bloodstream infections doctors and nurses will:

- Choose a vein where the catheter can be safely inserted and where the risk for infection is small.
- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before putting in the catheter.
- Wear a mask, cap, sterile gown, and sterile gloves when putting in the catheter to keep it sterile. The patient will be covered with a sterile sheet.
- Clean the patient’s skin with an antiseptic cleanser before putting in the catheter.
- Clean their hands, wear gloves, and clean the catheter opening with an antiseptic solution before using the catheter to draw blood or give medications. Healthcare providers also clean their hands and wear gloves when changing the bandage that covers the area where the catheter enters the skin.
- Decide every day if the patient still needs to have the catheter. The catheter will be removed as soon as it is no longer needed.
- Carefully handle medications and fluids that are given through the catheter.

### *What can I do to help prevent a catheter-associated bloodstream infection?*

- Ask your doctors and nurses to explain why you need the catheter and how long you will have it.

- Ask your doctors and nurses if they will be using all of the prevention methods discussed above.
- Make sure that all doctors and nurses caring for you clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for you.

**If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.**

- If the bandage comes off or becomes wet or dirty, tell your nurse or doctor immediately.
- Inform your nurse or doctor if the area around your catheter is sore or red.
- Do not let family and friends who visit touch the catheter or the tubing.
- Make sure family and friends clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after visiting you.

### *What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?*

Some patients are sent home from the hospital with a catheter in order to continue their treatment. If you go home with a catheter, your doctors and nurses will explain everything you need to know about taking care of your catheter.

- Make sure you understand how to care for the catheter before leaving the hospital. For example, ask for instructions on showering or bathing with the catheter and how to change the catheter dressing.
- Make sure you know who to contact if you have questions or problems after you get home.
- Make sure you wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before handling your catheter.
- Watch for the signs and symptoms of catheter-associated bloodstream infection, such as soreness or redness at the catheter site or fever, and call your healthcare provider immediately if any occur.

If you have additional questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Co-sponsored by:



# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

## about “Clostridium Difficile”

### What is Clostridium difficile infection?

*Clostridium difficile* [pronounced Klo-STRID-ee-um dif-uh-SEEL], also known as “*C. diff*” [See-dif], is a germ that can cause diarrhea. Most cases of *C. diff* infection occur in patients taking antibiotics. The most common symptoms of a *C. diff* infection include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Belly pain and tenderness

### Who is most likely to get C. diff infection?

The elderly and people with certain medical problems have the greatest chance of getting *C. diff*. *C. diff* spores can live outside the human body for a very long time and may be found on things in the environment such as bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. *C. diff* infection can spread from person-to-person on contaminated equipment and on the hands of doctors, nurses, other healthcare providers and visitors.

### Can C. diff infection be treated?

Yes, there are antibiotics that can be used to treat *C. diff*. In some severe cases, a person might have to have surgery to remove the infected part of the intestines. This surgery is needed in only 1 or 2 out of every 100 persons with *C. diff*.

### What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent C. diff infections?

To prevent *C. diff* infections, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient. This can prevent *C. diff* and other germs from being passed from one patient to another on their hands.
- Carefully clean hospital rooms and medical equipment that have been used for patients with *C. diff*.
- Use Contact Precautions to prevent *C. diff* from spreading to other patients. Contact Precautions mean:
  - Whenever possible, patients with *C. diff* will have a single room or share a room only with someone else who also has *C. diff*.
  - Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with *C. diff*.
  - Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves.
  - When leaving the room, hospital providers and visitors remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands.

o Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas, such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They can go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.

- Only give patients antibiotics when it is necessary.

### What can I do to help prevent C. diff infections?

- Make sure that all doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for you.

If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

- Only take antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor.
- Be sure to clean your own hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.

### Can my friends and family get C. diff when they visit me?

*C. diff* infection usually does not occur in persons who are not taking antibiotics. Visitors are not likely to get *C. diff*. Still, to make it safer for visitors, they should:

- Clean their hands before they enter your room and as they leave your room
- Ask the nurse if they need to wear protective gowns and gloves when they visit you.

### What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?

Once you are back at home, you can return to your normal routine. Often, the diarrhea will be better or completely gone before you go home. This makes giving *C. diff* to other people much less likely. There are a few things you should do, however, to lower the chances of developing *C. diff* infection again or of spreading it to others.

- If you are given a prescription to treat *C. diff*, take the medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor and pharmacist. Do not take half-doses or stop before you run out.
- Wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom and before preparing food.
- People who live with you should wash their hands often as well.
- If you develop more diarrhea after you get home, tell your doctor immediately.
- Your doctor may give you additional instructions.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Co-sponsored by:





# FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

## about “Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia”

### *What is a Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)?*

A “pneumonia” is an infection of the lungs. A “ventilator” is a machine that helps a patient breathe by giving oxygen through a tube. The tube can be placed in a patient’s mouth, nose, or through a hole in the front of the neck. The tube is connected to a ventilator. A “ventilator-associated pneumonia” or “VAP” is a lung infection or pneumonia that develops in a person who is on a ventilator.

### *Why do patients need a ventilator?*

A patient may need a ventilator when he or she is very ill or during and after surgery. Ventilators can be life-saving, but they can also increase a patient’s chance of getting pneumonia by making it easier for germs to get into the patient’s lungs.

### *What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia?*

To prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- **Keep the head of the patient’s bed raised** between 30 and 45 degrees unless other medical conditions do not allow this to occur.
- **Check the patient’s ability to breathe on his or her own** every day so that the patient can be taken off of the ventilator as soon as possible.
- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching the patient or the ventilator.
- **Clean the inside of the patient’s mouth** on a regular basis.
- **Clean or replace equipment** between use on different patients.



Keep the head of the patient’s bed raised between 30 to 45 degrees.

### *What can I do to help prevent VAP?*

- If you smoke, quit. Patients who smoke get more infections. If you are going to have surgery and will need to be on a ventilator, talk to your doctor before your surgery about how you can quit smoking.
- Family members can ask about raising the head of the bed.
- Family members can ask when the patient will be allowed to try breathing on his or her own.
- Family members can ask doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers to clean their hands.

If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

- Family members can ask about how often healthcare providers clean the patient’s mouth.

### *Can VAP be treated?*

VAP can be a very serious infection. Most of the time, these infections can be treated with antibiotics. The choice of antibiotics depends on which specific germs are causing the infection. Your healthcare provider will decide which antibiotic is best.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Co-sponsored by:



# Should you be tested for Hepatitis C?

## Why should you be tested for Hepatitis C?

There are things you can do to fight hepatitis C. Early detection can help. Knowing your hep C status will help prevent transmission to others. Hep C is a curable condition for most people. Better treatments are available with fewer side effects. Even if you do not start treatment, there are a few things you can still do to keep your liver healthy, such as avoiding alcohol and getting vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. Hepatitis C can lead to serious liver damage. Hepatitis C progresses slowly and often has no symptoms. Many people have hepatitis C and don't know it. The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested.

### Get tested for hepatitis C if you...

- Injected drugs, even just once many years ago
- Were born from 1945-1965 (Baby Boomers)\*
- Received donated blood or organs before 1992
- Received clotting factor before 1987
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail
- Are HIV positive
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick or injury with a sharp object
- Were ever on long-term dialysis
- Snorted drugs

\* In New York State, health care providers are required by law to offer anyone born between 1945 and 1965 a test for hepatitis C.

## Hepatitis C Antibody Test

A Hepatitis C Antibody Test is a blood test that looks for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. The test can be done by collecting a blood sample and sending it to a lab, or by a fingerstick using a hepatitis C rapid antibody test. The hepatitis C antibody test will tell you if you have ever been infected with hepatitis C. You may need a second test to know if you are currently infected.

## Hepatitis C Antibody Test Results

### If the test result is NON-REACTIVE/NEGATIVE

- A non-reactive or negative antibody test means that you are not currently infected with the hepatitis C virus.
- However, if you have engaged in risky behavior in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.
- Your non-reactive test result does not protect you from getting hepatitis C in the future.

### If the test result is REACTIVE/POSITIVE

- A reactive or positive antibody test means that you have antibodies to hepatitis C in your blood.
- You were exposed to hepatitis C at one time. You are probably infected with hepatitis C.
- You will need a second test to know for sure.

### Take the Second Test. Know for Sure.

- This second test is called an RNA test. Another name used for this test is a PCR test. The RNA test checks for hepatitis C virus in your blood.
- If you don't have the virus in your blood, this test will come back undetectable. If the test comes back detectable, then you have hepatitis C.

For a list of free hepatitis C testing sites in New York State go to: [www.health.ny.gov/hepatitis](http://www.health.ny.gov/hepatitis)

Say **yes** to the HIV test.



**YES**

We're **asking** everyone.  
It's the law.

# Key Facts to Know Before Getting an HIV Test:

- ▶ HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It can be spread through unprotected sex (anal, vaginal, or oral sex) with someone who has HIV, through contact with HIV-infected blood by sharing needles (piercing, tattooing, drug equipment, including needles), or by HIV-infected pregnant women to their infants during pregnancy or delivery, or by breast feeding.
- ▶ There are treatments for HIV/AIDS that can help a person stay healthy.
- ▶ People with HIV/AIDS can use safe practices to protect others from becoming infected. Safe practices also protect people with HIV/AIDS from being infected with different strains of HIV.
- ▶ Testing is voluntary and can be done at a public testing center without giving your name (anonymous testing).
- ▶ By law, HIV test results and other related information are kept confidential (private).
- ▶ Discrimination based on a person's HIV status is illegal. People who are discriminated against can get help.
- ▶ Consent for HIV-related testing remains in effect until it is withdrawn verbally or in writing. If the consent was given for a specific period of time, the consent applies to that time period only. You may withdraw your consent at any time.

**HOSPITAL  
FOR  
SPECIAL  
SURGERY**

**WHERE THE  
WORLD COMES  
TO GET BACK  
IN THE GAME**

Hospital for Special Surgery is an affiliate of  
NewYork-Presbyterian Healthcare System  
and Weill Cornell Medical College.

535 East 70th Street  
New York, NY 10021  
tel 212.606.1000  
[www.hss.edu](http://www.hss.edu)