

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF DURING A STAY IN A HOSPITAL

Hospitals are high risk milieu for bacterial contamination. Different types of bacteria, viruses and other germs are prevalent everywhere on flat surfaces such as night tables, telephones, TV remote controls, bed rails, staff hands and clothing etc.

Every year, in Québec only, 4000 patients die of infections contracted in the hospitals where they entered for treatment or operations.

Strict hygiene measures may reduce the infection rate by at least 50%. Hospital acquired infections are **AVOIDABLE**.

As a patient, you have an important role to play in your own protection by ensuring that the proper basic hygiene measures are being respected. It is your life which is at stake!.



t. 514.761.2438

100 rue Berlioz, # 305, Montréal (Québec) H3E 1N4

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HAND WASHING

THE STAFF

Ask all hospital staff to wash their hands before touching you, even doctors.

It is not an easy question to ask for a patient, but nicely and politely ask “please, do not forget to wash your hands, it is important for me” it will work. The staff should wash their hands with water and soap or with a hydro alcoholic solution that **MUST** be provided and at hand in each room. All hospital staff, even doctors should wear hospital gowns well tied, when they enter your room.

THE PATIENT

Make sure to wash your own hands at least 3 times a day and especially before eating, after using the bathroom, or when returning to your room. Keeping at hand a bottle of a hydro alcoholic solution will be very handy.

THE VISITORS

Visitors must also wash their hands before entering your room and before leaving the hospital grounds. Do not forget to remind them.

How to properly wash hands

Washing hands is very efficient as long as it is properly done. Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces. Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. Rinse hands well under running water. Use towel paper to turn off the faucet.

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KEEPING YOUR ENVIRONMENT CLEAN

BATHROOM AND TOILETS CLEANING

Make sure that it is properly done on a daily basis.

The mop used in your bathroom should not be used in your room, even less the cloth used to clean the bathroom.

The room furniture must also be cleaned daily, including the bed rails constantly touched by every one.

Do not hesitate to ask your family or visitors to do a bit of cleaning if you judge that it is not being properly done by the cleaning staff on a daily basis.

INSTRUMENTS DESINFECTATION

Stethoscopes and other instruments must be wiped with alcohol before and after use.

There again, ASK, it may save you from a major infection!

INTRAVENOUS TUBES, URINARY TUBES, CATHETERS ⁽¹⁾

Must be inserted and removed under strict sterile conditions: some hospitals have dramatically reduced their rate of infection (particularly MRSA) by sterilizing patients' skin before using a catheter.

Do not hesitate to ask questions of the staff on the required sterile conditions.

Urinary tubes are the first cause of nosocomial infections. Make sure that you really need one and more importantly that it is not kept long – it increases the risk of becoming infected. There again, some questioning will help!

⁽¹⁾A catheter is a tube inserted in a vein permanently for infection of different liquid.

SHARING ROOM WITH INFECTED PATIENTS

Be sure that you are not sharing your room with an infected patient – that person should be in isolation. REQUEST to be transferred immediately to another room. It is your right.

OTHER IMPORTANT MEASURES

- Always make sure to know the names of the doctor in charge of your case (there is only one) and the names of the attending staff taking care of you (nurses and other doctors). Write their name down.
- Ask for a written list of all medication and dosage and keep that list with you.
- You have the right of a clear and well- explained diagnosis from the doctor responsible for your case.
- Do not hesitate to request a meeting with the doctor, in the presence of a member of your family or a friend. Prepare your questions ahead of time to make sure you do not forget anything that you judge important.

LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

A hospital-acquired infection may start a few days (to a few weeks) after leaving the hospital. Make sure to leave the hospital with the telephone number and name of the responsible doctor. If possible ask to have a written resumé of your case. Ask for your medical dossier. It might take a couple of weeks before you receive it.

OTHER RESOURCES

ORGANISMS THAT MAY HELP YOU

Patients Committee: you may consult with them anytime. Consult with them concerning any aspect of your stay that bothers you.

Commissioner to the quality of care and complaints- do not fill any form, go directly to his/her office and explain your complaint. This complaint is without prejudice; nothing can be held legally against you.

Clarifying a situation may help you tremendously. It is your RIGHT.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A PATIENT

Visit our site www.advin.org

514 761 2438

Do not hesitate to call us. We are here to help you as much as we can.

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RISK FACTORS BEFORE YOUR STAY IN A HOSPITAL

These are the risk factors that you should be aware of before being hospitalized. They might create major health problems during your stay.

You must advise the staff upon admission to the hospital.

A RECENT HOSPITALIZATION

You might have caught SARM (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) and be a carrier of this bacteria without suffering any apparent symptoms. Older people, people with a weakened immune systems (for instance people having been treated with chemotherapy), burns, surgical wounds or serious underlying health problems are more vulnerable.

RESIDING IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY

MRSA or the C. difficile bacteria are far more prevalent in these facilities than in hospitals. They are easily transmitted by the hands and the environment even to persons in good health.

PARTICIPATING IN CONTACT SPORTS

The variety CA-MRSA (community acquired) has crept into many amateur and professional teams particularly in the States. The bacteria may be easily transmitted by sharing towels, razors, uniforms, equipment. The bacteria spread easily through cuts and skin-to-skin contact.

RECENT ANTIBIOTIC USE

Certain types of antibiotics may increase the risk of catching MRSA or C. difficile or other bacteria.

COLONIZED PATIENTS (PERSONS CARRYING A BACTERIA)

Should be treated with certain precautions upon admission in a hospital. Patients admitted in a hospital suffering from a C. difficile diarrhea should be isolated even in the emergency ward.