Healthcare-associated infections in community aged care

What clients and visitors can do to prevent and limit infection
What are healthcare-associated infections?

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are infections that occur as a result of healthcare interventions and are caused by microorganisms — such as bacteria and viruses.

They can happen when you are being treated in a hospital or clinic. But they can also happen at home.

The risk of becoming infected depends on your health, whether you have had surgery, and medicines that you take (including some antibiotics). Older people tend to be more vulnerable to infection.
How can you protect yourself and others against HAIs?

The most important thing you can do is perform hand hygiene.

Hand hygiene can be performed using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

It is important that you, your care worker and visitors performs hand hygiene at the right moments.

Hand Hygiene should be performed when your hands look dirty and before:

• touching or eating food or putting anything in your mouth
• touching your eyes, nose or mouth
• touching a dressing.

Also perform hand hygiene after:

• going to the bathroom/toilet
• sneezing, coughing or disposing of tissues
• touching a dressing
• handling dirty clothes or linen.

Everyone — health and personal care workers, residents and visitors — has a role in preventing and controlling healthcare-associated infections.
Prevent the spread of disease by performing hand hygiene

**HAND RUB**

1. Apply alcohol-based hand rub to hands
2. Rub hands together

**HAND WASH**

1. Wet hands with running water
2. Apply soap to hands
3. Rub hands together
4. Rinse hands with water
5. Dry hands thoroughly
How to perform hand hygiene:

1. Wash hands:
   - Apply soap to hands
   - Lather soap and rub hands together thoroughly

2. Rub hands together thoroughly.

3. Once dry, your hands are clean.
What can you do?

There are a number of things you can do to lessen the risk of infection at home:

- perform hand hygiene carefully with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- don’t be afraid to ask care workers if they have performed hand hygiene
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then perform hand hygiene
- try not to have too much clutter in your house
- make sure pets are not in the room during care activities
- tell your care worker straight away if you feel unwell
- tell your care worker if the area around the insertion site where drips, lines, tubes or drains become red, swollen or painful
- if you have a wound, keep the skin around the dressing clean and dry. Tell your care worker promptly if the dressing becomes loose or wet
- follow instructions on looking after medical devices you have. If you are not sure of what to do, ask
- maintain a clean environment
- correct handling of linen, food and waste.
More information

Don’t hesitate to ask your doctor or care worker for more information.

Consumer guides are also available on specific healthcare associated infections such as MRSA, VRE and C. difficile
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au

References


Hand Hygiene Australia (2008) Health Care Associated Infections
http://www.hha.org.au/ForConsumers/FactSheets.aspx#HCAI