



IPC Topic: Standard Precautions for All Patient Care

Introduction: Standard and transmission-based precautions are used to help stop the spread of germs. Standard Precautions are used for all patients care all the time³.

What is the risk? In healthcare, germs are present in body and environmental reservoirs⁵. Healthcare workers are at risk of encountering germs. These germs can be transferred through touch to the patient and staff. Using standard and universal precautions reduces the risk of germs spread¹⁵.

Key Components of Standard Precautions

❑ Hand hygiene

Cleaning your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (ABHS) prevents germs on your hands from spreading to patients and to other staff. By washing your hands at all the below times, you can decrease germ spread.

Perform hand hygiene:

- Before initial client or client environment contact
- Before taking off wound dressing and before placing clean dressing.
- After body fluid exposure risk
- After client or client environment contact
- After removal of gloves
- Hand Sanitizer is recommended when hands are not visibly soiled⁴.

❑ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The use of PPE protects our clothing, hands, respiratory tract, and mucus membranes from germs that can make staff and patients sick. Guidelines for the use of PPE can be found below:

Gloves

- Wear gloves when anticipating contact with a patient's:
- Blood or body substances (i.e., fluids or solids)
- Mucous membranes (e.g., nasal, oral, genital area)
- Non-intact skin (e.g., wound or surgical incision)
- Insertion points of a patient's invasive or indwelling device¹⁴

Gowns

Wear a gown when contact with patient blood or body substances is expected.-For example:

- Contact with patient's non-intact skin (e.g., wounds)
- During procedures likely to generate a splash or spray of blood or body fluid
- Handling containers or patient fluids likely to leak, splash or spill¹

□ Mouth, nose, eye protection

Wear personal protective equipment when anticipating potential splashes or sprays of blood/body substances/fluids (e.g., emptying a urinary catheter) during patient care.

- Face Masks—protect nose and mouth.
- Goggles—protect eyes.
- Face shields—protect face (i.e., nose, mouth and eyes)¹⁴

□ Respiratory Hygiene /Cough Etiquette

Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette prevents the transmission of all respiratory infections in healthcare settings.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough, or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands⁶.
- Remember to immediately wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing⁶.

□ Patient placement

- In addition to your facility policy, place patients who pose a risk for transmission to others in a single-patient room when available.

- Consider cohorting patients with the same infection if single rooms are unavailable².

❑ **Sharps Safety**

Following sharp safety protocols can prevent healthcare worker and patient exposure to bloodborne pathogens from needlesticks and other sharps injuries that make patients and/or healthcare workers sick¹¹.

- Place used disposable syringes and needles, scalpel blades, and other sharp items in appropriate, puncture-resistant containers located as close as possible to the area where the items are used.
- Do not recap used needles by using both hands and any other technique that involves directing the point of a needle toward any part of the body.¹¹
- Follow federal and state requirements and facility policies to protect healthcare workers from blood borne pathogen exposures².

❑ **Safe Injection Practices**

Safe injection practices protect patients and healthcare workers from getting and/or spreading bloodborne pathogens¹².

- Needles and syringes are single use items and should not be used on more than one patient.
- Do not use bags or bottles of intravenous solution as a common source of supply for multiple patients⁸.
- Wear a surgical mask when performing lumbar punctures².

❑ **Safe handling of laundry and textiles**

Germs can live in dirt, soil, dirty laundry, linens, and textiles in healthcare settings. These germs can spread through touch and breathing in¹⁰. Safe handling of laundry and textiles can help prevent germs from spreading to other staff and patients¹³.

- Handle soiled laundry in a manner that prevents germs from spreading to the environment and healthcare personnel clothing.
- Soiled laundry should be put in bags or contained at point of use and clearly labeled. Do not shake, sort, or prerinse at the point of use.

- Wear PPE according to facility policy¹³.

□ **Patient-care equipment and instruments/devices**

Follow facility policies and procedures when handling patient-care equipment and instruments/devices that may be contaminated with blood or body fluids.

- Wear personal protective equipment according to the level of anticipated contamination, when handling patient-care equipment.
- Wear personal protective equipment when handling instruments/devices that are visibly soiled or may have been in contact with blood or body fluids².

□ **Clean and Disinfect Environmental Surfaces**

Without proper cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces, germs can spread through touch, splashes, sprays and by breathing them in and can make staff and patients sick¹⁰. Guidelines for proper cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces can be found below.

- Routine and targeted cleaning of environmental surfaces as indicated by the level of patient contact and degree of soiling should be done.
 - Clean high touch surfaces at least daily.
 - Clean other surfaces when they are visibly dirty and on a routine basis.
- Clean surfaces with soap and water or with cleaning products appropriate for use on the surface.
- Use an EPA-registered disinfecting product for the specific harmful germ (such as viruses or bacteria) if known².

Summary

Standard Precautions are the basic infection control actions which are used in the care of all patients⁴. Using standard precautions in your workplace can help to stop the spread of germs. Proper hand hygiene, use of PPE, safe handling of laundry and textiles cleaning and disinfecting and following safe injection practices are ways that you can make a difference.

References:

1. [Infection Control in Health Care: An Overview | Project Firstline | CDC](#)

2. [Isolation Precautions Guideline | Infection Control | CDC | CDC](#)
3. [Standard Precautions | Dental Infection Prevention and Control | CDC](#)
4. [Standard Precautions for All Patient Care | Infection Control | CDC](#)
5. [Infection Control in Health Care: An Overview | Project Firstline | CDC](#)
6. [Healthy Habits: Coughing and Sneezing | Water, Sanitation, and Environmentally Related Hygiene \(WASH\) | CDC](#)
7. [Safe Injection Practices to Prevent Transmission of Infections to Patients | Injection Safety | CDC](#)
8. [How to Read a Disinfectant Label](#)
9. [Infection Control in Health Care: An Overview | Project Firstline | CDC](#)
10. [sharps-safety-workbook-2008-p.pdf](#)
11. [Safe Injection Practices to Prevent Transmission of Infections to Patients | Injection Safety | CDC](#)
12. [Infection Control Basics | Infection Control | CDC](#)
13. [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) 101](#)
14. [Training and Educational Materials | Project Firstline | CDC](#)