Patient/Family Information
ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

CONTACT PRECAUTIONS for Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria

Reviewed by Infection Control & Epidemiology 11/09

What is Contact Precautions?

Contact Precautions are used to lower the risk of spreading certain types of germs. You may be put in a private hospital room or share a room with another patient with a similar type of germ. There will be a sign on your door saying that you are in Contact Precautions. You will also wear a colored armband to let staff know you are in Contact Precautions.

What are antibiotic resistant bacteria?

Antibiotic resistant bacteria no longer respond to certain antibiotics that are commonly used to treat them. Examples of antibiotic resistant bacteria are MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), VRE (Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococcus) and Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamases (ESBL). Most people who get resistant bacteria are ill with other diseases, have some type of medical device (tubes or drains) or had recent surgery.

Will my resistant bacteria ever go away?

Some patient's resistant bacteria go away after the patient has been home for awhile and is getting healthier and stronger. Other patients remain colonized with resistant bacteria for long periods of time.

Why are people wearing gowns and gloves?

Most staff going into your room will wear a gown and gloves. Gowns and gloves are worn by staff to prevent the spread of germs to other patients because they take care of several patients each day. Staff will throw the gowns and gloves away and clean their hands before leaving your room.

Why don't my visitors need to wear a gown and gloves like the doctors and nurses?

If your visitors remember to clean their hands, with soap and water or the waterless handrub, when they leave your room, there is a low risk of them getting sick from you. There is also little risk of your visitors spreading germs to other patients because they do not have direct contact with them. Your visitors usually only need to wear a gown and gloves if they will be helping to take care of you (changing your dressings, bathing you, taking care of your trach, etc.). Visitors must remove gown and gloves, and clean hands before leaving your room.

What should I do to prevent the spread of germs to others?

- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or the waterless handrub before leaving your room.
- Remind your visitors to clean their hands when they leave your room.

If you do not see your caregiver cleanse their hands, please ask them to do so.

Can I leave my room?

You must clean your hands and wear clean clothing before you leave your room. You can walk through the halls and courtyard areas, but you cannot go to school or to activity areas, lounges or Mott park areas. You cannot visit with other patients or their visitors. You may be able to go to the cafeteria; your nurse will tell you if it is ok.

When will Contact Precautions end?

You will need to stay in Contact Precautions until you no longer have a positive test for an antibiotic resistant bacteria. Most patients remain in Contact Precautions during their entire hospital admission. If you are admitted to the hospital at a later date, you will be placed into Contact Precautions and tested. If your test comes back negative, you will be removed from Contact Precautions. If the results are positive, you will remain in Contact Precautions.

Preventing spread of resistant bacteria at home

Hand washing and good personal hygiene are the best ways to prevent the spread of germs, including resistant bacteria. Wash your hands after using the bathroom, before you eat and before and after you handle any bandages or tubes. Others living in your home or assisting you need to do the same. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors. If you are given antibiotics, follow your doctor's instructions for taking them.

If you have further questions, please contact your nurse or doctor.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information on MRSA http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html and VRE http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_vre.html

University of Michigan Health System