

Help Keep Your Loved Ones Safe from Infection

Here are some tips to guide you in being a good hospital visitor:

Clean your hands before and after visiting

The soap and hand rub in patient rooms are for everyone's use. Please clean your hands with soap and water or hand rub when entering and leaving a patient's room to avoid bringing in and carrying out germs. Insist that health care providers do the same before caring for your loved one. Clean your hands after sneezing, coughing, touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, after using the restroom, and before and after eating and drinking.

Consider your surroundings

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeves. Sit on the chairs provided rather than the patient's bed and avoid handling any patient equipment. Please check for, read and follow any instructions posted outside the patient's room before entering.

Stay home if you are sick

If you are sick, it's better for the patient and for you if you stay home. Do not visit the hospital when you feel sick or if you have had any symptoms of illness within the last three days, which include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever (or feeling feverish), uncontrolled cough or rash.

Check first before you bring food, send flowers or take the kids

While flowers, young visitors and home-baked goodies spread cheer, they may not be permitted, so please check with the nurse first. Flowers are often not allowed in intensive care units. If you change the water in a vase of flowers, be sure to wash your hands afterward. Bringing food is risky because the patient may be on a special diet or the food could spoil and make the patient sick. Likewise, check with the healthcare facility about the rules for children visiting. If you bring youngsters, don't let them play on the floor or bed and have them wash their hands as they enter and leave the room. Make sure the child is free from symptoms of infection (e.g., runny nose, sore throat, rash, cough, etc.)

Be aware of special precautions

If the person you are visiting is on "Isolation Precautions," talk to the nurse before entering the room to find out what steps you will have to take, such as wearing a mask or other protective clothing. Also ask for any educational materials that may be available.

Contain the clutter

Limit the patient's personal items. Less clutter eases the critical job of keeping hospital rooms clean. Keep patient items off the floor and away from waste containers.

Take care when visiting more than one

If you are visiting multiple patients (for instance, if you are a pastor), clean your hands before and after seeing each patient. If you bring communion to patients, lay the wafer on a paper towel, not directly on the patient's table, and do not share the communion cup between patients. Visit the person in isolation last and follow the precautions specified.

Stay healthy at home

You can help keep the patient healthy once they return home. Follow their discharge instructions and eliminate germs from the patient's environment by using disinfectants, such as sprays and wipes, to clean hard surfaces often. Ask for special instructions if the patient had a drug-resistant infection such as MRSA or *C. difficile*.

