

Infection Control Precautions and Your Care: A Guide for Patients

When you are on Infection Control Precautions (Additional Precautions) staff use protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and gowns, and perform special cleaning tasks to protect you and other patients. These precautions prevent germs from passing to others, including patients, visitors, and staff. Each person responds to these measures in his or her unique way. This information explains common environmental and emotional concerns shared by patients, families, and visitors. You may benefit from talking to your health-care team about your feelings and needs. The team may include social workers, child-life therapists, recreation therapists, art therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, chaplains, infection control professionals, nurses, doctors and others. They are available to provide support and help you cope.

Depending on the type of precautions, access to common areas of the hospital may be limited and visits from friends and family may be reduced. The precautions may require you, and those in your immediate environment, to wear masks, gowns, and/or gloves. Similar precautions may or may not be necessary when you are in a long-term care facility. If used, practices may be slightly different than those in hospital settings. The use of gowns, gloves or masks are rarely necessary when you are home.

What to Expect and How to Cope: Helpful Tips

- **Education about the type of precautions you are on may reduce some of your stress.** If you have questions, talk with your doctors, nurses, or other healthcare providers in your health-care team about why and how long these precautions may be necessary. Remember these precautions are critical to helping prevent the spread of germs
- **Having objects of comfort can help lessen separation and boredom.** You may find comfort from your favorite books and music. It can also be helpful to arrange telephone calls, video chats, visits with loved ones or possible access to wireless internet.
- **Increase family presence whenever possible.** Family presence enables patients to have loved ones who can stay by their side 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when appropriate, to create a welcoming environment that enables family and caregivers to more fully participate in patient care by being present for physician rounds and helping with transitions in care.
- **Keep several activities on hand.** People often tire of doing the same thing every day, so try to have a variety of games, movies, books, and/or arts and crafts to help stimulate, distract, and comfort you during this time. Some of these items may need to be cleaned and disinfected before being removed from the patient room. Please check with your health care team to see which items may fall under this category and take personal belongings home following discharge or discard.
- **Maintain a daily routine as much as possible.** Opening your blinds during the day and closing them at night may help. If possible, try to limit naps during the day to cope with boredom as it may lead to trouble sleeping at night.
- **Discuss available options for in-room or out-of-room activities with your recreation therapist and family/friends.** Sessions may include opportunities for: creative expression, physical activity, relaxation techniques and/or other personalized strategies.
- **If you notice major changes in your mood or behavior, such as increased irritability or sadness, discuss these concerns with your health care team.** If necessary, a consultation may be arranged with members of your health-care team to offer you additional support.

Note: People tend to cope differently. Please do not hesitate to ask questions, share feelings and seek the support of your health-care team while receiving care. If you have any suggestions to the care you are currently receiving on Additional Precautions, we welcome your feedback in order for us to continue making improvements for future patient experiences.