PATIENT SAFETY: PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS (HAIs)

The Facts

- You can get an HAI from any healthcare setting (hospital, nursing home, outpatient center or dialysis center).
- Germs that cause an HAI can be spread person to person by unclean hands of healthcare workers and improper use of medical equipment.
- HAIs affect 1 in 31 hospitalized patients and 197 patients with an HAI die every day.
- In 2019, there were 3,547 HAIs reported in North Carolina. This is a decrease in over 600 reported HAIs in 2018.
- NC healthcare facilities are working to keep patients safe. You can help by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and following the recommendations below.

You Can Protect Yourself From HAIs By Being a Safe, Informed Patient

1. SPEAK UP: Share your questions and concerns with your healthcare providers. Ask them what they are doing to protect you.
2. KEEP HANDS CLEAN: Be sure everyone cleans their hands before touching you.
3. BE ANTIBIOTICS AWARE: Ask if tests will be performed to make sure you are given the right antibiotic.
4. KNOW INFECTION SIGNS: Tell your healthcare provider if you notice any symptoms such as drainage, redness or pain at your IV catheter site or surgery site.
5. CHECK FOR DIARRHEA: Tell your healthcare provider if you have three or more loose bowel movements within 24 hours, especially if you have been taking an antibiotic.
6. PROTECT YOURSELF: Get vaccinated against the flu and other diseases to prevent these infections.

Make Sure Your Hands Are Clean

Your hands can spread germs and need to be cleaned regularly. Make sure you, your visitors, and your healthcare providers are cleaning hands appropriately:

- after touching bed rails, bedside tables, remote controls, phones, or doorknobs;
- after using the restroom;
- before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth;
- before eating;
- before and after changing bandages; and
- after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Clean hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer or wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Turn off the faucet with a paper towel.

The NC SHARPPS Program Works to Keep You Safe

NC Surveillance for Healthcare Associated and Antimicrobial-Resistant Pathogens Patient Safety (SHARPPS) Program mission: to work in partnership to prevent, detect, and respond to events and outbreaks of healthcare-associated and antimicrobial resistant infections in North Carolina.

The NC SHARPPS Program:

- collaborates with local, state, and national partners in public health, healthcare, and academia to develop and implement infection prevention and antibiotic stewardship strategies.
- provides education and training to healthcare professionals to increase awareness and prevent HAIs and antimicrobial resistance.

For more information regarding HAIs and the NC SHARPPS Program, visit https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/hai/program.html and email nchai@dhhs.nc.gov

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