



Hand washing: Simple way to prevent infection and save lives

FORT ATKINSON – Quality and safety are key considerations in every aspect of care at Fort HealthCare and so the organization routinely provides information to many healthcare quality monitoring and reporting organizations. Reporting includes how patients respond to treatment and how they compare to similar hospitals. The reports help establish goals for improving the care. Fort HealthCare's infection control department uses these reports to minimize the incidence of infection and ensure that patients have uncomplicated hospital stays with the best possible treatment outcomes.

It is well documented that hand washing is one of the simplest and most effective strategies for preventing infections in a hospital setting. Hospital staff are trained in proper hand hygiene, but no patient should ever feel embarrassed or nervous about reminding a doctor, nurse or other hospital personnel to wash their hands before or after interacting with them. Keep in mind that your healthcare facility wants you to get well and preventing infections is critical to that.

At Fort HealthCare there is special attention paid to the prevention of infection. Chaired by Don Williams, M.D. the Infection Control Committee meets four times each year to review policies and procedures for minimizing infections. “We look at infections that occur in patients and see if there are ways to improve our care to eliminate infections while they are at the hospital or after they are discharged,” said Anna Hutchings, R.N. and infection control coordinator. Fort HealthCare reviews current recommendations from organizations like the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on best practices for delivering care, to ensure the most current practices are being followed. “Hand hygiene is one of the most important things you can do to prevent infections,” remarked Hutchings.

Patients and visitors of the hospital, even for short periods of time, should wash their hands often to prevent the spread of infections much like how doctors, nurses and all hospital staff practice good hand hygiene. Also, patients should feel comfortable encouraging friends and family visiting the hospital to wash their hands too, especially after touching objects or surfaces in the hospital room, before eating and after using the restroom. Soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizer solution are equally effective and are readily available in all areas of the hospital, including patient rooms.

Interested individuals can watch a short podcast about hand washing from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under the “For Patients” tab on the Fort HealthCare web site at FortHealthCare.com. Also available on that tab is information about infection prevention in surgical sites, catheters and information about MRSA.

Steps to properly wash hands, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

Wet hands with water
Apply enough soap to cover the entire hand surface
Rub hands palm to palm
Rub opposite palm over the back of the other hand, switch to do opposite hands
Rub with fingers interlaced
Rub back of fingernails to opposite palm
Rub each thumb in the grasp of the opposite palm
Rinse hands with water
Dry hands thoroughly
Use towel to turn off faucet
Entire process should take 20 seconds