

For Patients, Residents, and Families

Stay Healthy and Prevent HAIs

What are HAIs?

Germs are everywhere, especially in health care settings. Sometimes while receiving medical treatments and procedures, these germs can cause infections. These are called healthcare-associated infections (HAIs).

Causes

You could get an HAI anywhere you receive health care such as a hospital, clinic, dialysis center, or nursing home.



Germs can spread on unwashed hands of health care staff, through improper cleaning, surfaces, or medical devices.

Signs and symptoms

Watch for signs or symptoms of infection after a medical procedure or treatment, such as:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Fever

If you have signs or symptoms, seek medical care immediately.

How serious are HAIs?

HAIs can cause serious illness (like sepsis) and even death if left untreated. There are steps you can take to prevent the spread of germs and lower your risk of getting an HAI.



Types of HAIs

There are different types of HAIs, including:

Catheter-associated urinary tract infections are caused by germs that enter the body through a urinary catheter (tube used drained urine from the bladder).

Central line-associated bloodstream infections are from bacteria or other germs that get in the blood through a medical device used to draw blood or give medication.

***Clostridioides difficile*, or C. diff** is an infection that causes severe diarrhea, usually after using antibiotics.

Surgical site infections occur after surgery, in the part of the body where the procedure took place.

Multidrug-resistant infections are caused by germs, mainly bacteria, that are resistant to antibiotics or other drugs meant to control them.

Treatment

Most HAIs can be treated with antibiotics in combination with removing or changing your medical device, if you have one. However, some HAIs caused by multidrug-resistant germs, can be very hard to treat.

How Can I Prevent Getting an HAI?

Clean your hands

- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water to scrub hands for at least 20 seconds. Or use hand sanitizer and rub hands together until dry.
- If your health care provider does not wash their hands before providing care, speak up and ask them to do so.



Take antibiotics only when necessary

- Only take antibiotics if they are prescribed to you by a health care provider.
- Take antibiotics exactly as directed and as long as directed.



Keep wounds and dressings clean

- Always make sure you clean your hands before and after caring for your wound.
- Don't let family, friends, or pets touch the wound or dressings unless they are caring for you.



Keep your environment clean

- If you are in a hospital or long-term care facility, allow environmental services workers to clean your room.
- If you are at home or caring for someone at home, clean the area often, especially high-touch surfaces.



Talk to a health care provider

- Ask your health care provider what specific steps you can take to prevent an infection before, during, and after your visit or medical procedure.
- If you have signs or symptoms of infection, seek medical care immediately.



Take other steps to stay healthy

- Incorporate physical activity and a healthy diet into your daily life.
- Do not smoke.
- Stay up to date with vaccinations, such as the flu and COVID-19 vaccine.

