



## Infection control

Infection control is the best step to preventing the spread of germs and diseases. Elderly residents are prone to catching illnesses, and CNAs should take every precaution to ensure that they don't transmit or catch an infection. Infection control involves correct **hand hygiene**, **the use of gloves** and **protective barriers**, and appropriate **disposal of sharps**.

CNAs are in contact with blood and body fluids on a daily basis, and this lesson will teach them the **standard precautions** that every staff member should use when assisting residents. It will also cover the seven steps to hand washing, the proper use of hand sanitizer, and how to handle objects such as linens, trash, and dangerous waste.

This lesson will also explain the four means of disease transmission: **airborne**, **bloodborne**, **contact**, and **droplet**.

Enjoy your day of training, and stay tuned for next month's issue of **CNA Training Advisor**, which will cover **customer service**.

### Hand washing activity

Hand washing is an important part of infection control. You can conduct a hand washing demonstration to show the proper way to wash hands using the tips inside this issue. Have the CNAs perform the techniques as well.

### PROGRAM PREP

#### Program time

Approximately 30 minutes

#### Learning objectives

Participants in this activity will:

- Learn proper hand washing techniques
- Understand the four standard precautions
- Identify how diseases are transmitted

#### Preparation

- Review the material on pp. 2–4
- Duplicate the **CNA Professor** insert for participants
- Gather equipment for participants (e.g., an attendance sheet, pencils, etc.)

#### Method

1. Place a copy of **CNA Professor** and a pencil at each participant's seat
2. Conduct the questionnaire as a pretest or, if participants' reading skills are limited, as an oral posttest
3. Present the program material
4. Review the questionnaire
5. Discuss the answers

### Tips and tools for CNA training

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## INFECTION CONTROL

Infections can have deadly outcomes for residents, and the worse a resident's functional status is, the greater the likelihood for infection. CNAs should take every precaution to ensure that residents don't transmit or catch an illness.

Proper hand hygiene, use of gloves and protective barriers, and sharps disposal are essential to infection control.

Standard precautions should be used for all residents receiving care, regardless of their diagnosis or presumed infection status. Standard precautions apply to blood; all body fluids, secretions, and excretions except sweat, regardless of whether they contain visible blood; nonintact skin; and mucous membranes.

Standard precautions are designed to reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms from recognized and unrecognized sources of infection in healthcare settings.

A risk assessment to determine necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and work practices to avoid contact with blood, body fluids, excretions, and secretions will help customize standard precautions to the healthcare setting of interest.

Killing germs outside the body is much easier than killing those inside the body, so controlling infections involves routine cleaning. Remember that germs thrive on moist surfaces.

### Standard precaution #1: Hand washing

Hand washing is the most important precaution a CNA can take to prevent the spread of infection. Thorough hand washing removes germs from the skin.

Wash hands before and after any resident or body fluid contact. Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces that are contaminated with blood or body fluids. When wearing gloves, wash hands as soon as the gloves are removed.

Good hand washing techniques require soap, water, and friction. Hand washing pulls the oily dirt free from your skin. The soap lather suspends the dirt and germs trapped inside, which is then washed away with water.

Use any type of soap, although liquid soap is preferred since bar soap can hold germs if not rinsed properly. To prevent chapping, use a mild soap with warm water, pat hands dry, and apply lotion liberally and frequently. Antibacterial soaps have become increasingly popular in recent years. However, these soaps are no more effective at killing germs than regular soap and water.

Alcohol rubs/gels/rinses are excellent hand disinfectants if they contain at least 60% alcohol and significantly reduce the number of microorganisms on the skin. The alcohol content completely evaporates in about 15 seconds. Remove dirt before using a hand sanitizer, since alcohol-based hand disinfectants work best on clean skin. If possible, wash your hands with soap and warm water, then apply hand sanitizer.

Regardless of the method, CNAs should wash their hands when they are visibly dirty, after using the restroom, before leaving a resident's room, before and after touching the resident or any wounds, and in other common unsanitary situations.

### Hand washing steps

Take the following steps to ensure proper hand washing:

1. Rinse hands under warm running water, which is less damaging to skin and creates a better lather.
2. Rub hands together, making a soapy lather. Do this away from the running water for at least 10–20 seconds, being careful not to wash the lather away.
3. Wash the front and back of your hands, your wrists, as well as between your fingers and under your nails. Use friction to help remove germs.
4. Let the water run into the sink, not down your elbows, by pointing your fingers downward. This prevents water from running down your arms and contaminating clean hands.
5. Dry hands thoroughly with a clean hand towel or disposable towel.
6. Turn off the water with a paper towel, which prevents recontaminating hands.
7. Use hand lotion to prevent hands from becoming chapped.

### Hand sanitizer sanitation steps

Make sure you are properly using hand sanitizer by taking the following steps:

1. Apply a dime-size amount of sanitizer onto hands and rub hands together, covering both hands entirely, including under the nails
2. Evenly distribute the disinfectant by using a rubbing motion for about 15 seconds or until your hands feel dry, whichever is longest
3. Wash your hands at the next opportunity
4. Apply hand lotion to counter the drying effects of alcohol

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**INFECTION CONTROL**

**Standard precaution #2: Gloves**

Take the following steps to ensure proper glove use:

- Use gloves in all situations in which you may come in contact with blood or body fluids
- Use gloves for resident care involving contact with mucous membranes, such as brushing teeth
- Change gloves and wash hands between resident contacts
- Use gloves when you have scrapes, scratches, or chapped skin
- Do not wash or disinfect disposable gloves for reuse
- Use thick rubber gloves to protect your hands during housekeeping chores or instrument cleaning involving potential blood contact

**Q** What are ways you remind yourself to follow standard precautions?

**Discuss.**

**Standard precaution #3: Protective barriers**

Protective barriers reduce the risk of exposure of your skin or mucous membranes to potentially infectious blood and body fluids. You should wear the appropriate barriers for the work you are doing. Employers must provide suitable PPE in the right sizes. PPE includes gloves, gowns, masks, eye protection, face shields, mouthpieces, and resuscitation devices.

Hypoallergenic gloves, glove liners, powderless gloves, or other alternatives must be available for those who are allergic to the regular gloves. The required equipment depends on your work. When splashing of blood or body fluids is likely, wear the following PPE in addition to gloves:

- **Mask** (if your face could be splashed with blood or body fluids)
- **Eye protection** (if your eyes could be splashed with blood or body fluids)
- **Gown** (if your clothing or skin could be splashed)

**Standard precaution #4: Proper sharps disposal**

A sharp is any object that can penetrate the skin, such as needles, scalpels, broken glass, broken capillary tubes, and exposed ends of wires. A sharp is contaminated if it has been in contact with blood, body fluids, or body tissues.

Contaminated sharps need to be disposed of properly. Follow your organization's policies. A puncture-proof biohazardous container must be used in care facilities. Biohazardous waste from facilities (not from resident's homes) must be disposed of by specially licensed companies.

Be careful to prevent injuries from needlesticks and other sharp instruments after procedures, when cleaning used instruments, and when disposing of used needles.

Do not recap or manipulate needles. Nursing and personal care facilities should be using or planning to use needleless injection systems or needles with injury protection.

If you must use a regular needle, remember to not recap needles. If it is absolutely necessary to recap a needle, use one hand to slide the needle into a cap lying on a flat surface. Don't hold the cap in your other hand while recapping.

**Standard precautions for handling objects**

Take the following steps to ensure the proper handling of objects:

- Clean used equipment before giving it to another resident. Follow your facility's cleaning procedures.
- Use disposable equipment only once.
- Dirty linens should be rolled, not shaken, and should be held away from your body. Linens soiled with body fluids can be washed with other laundry, using your facility's procedures.
- No special precautions are needed for dishes or silverware. Normal dish soap and hot water (water temperature must be hot enough to meet state requirements) will kill germs.

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## INFECTION CONTROL

- Change cleaning rags and sponges frequently.
- Stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, and thermometers should be cleaned between each use, using your facility's procedures.
- Dispose of dangerous waste such as needles very carefully. Needles and other sharp devices should go into clearly marked puncture-proof containers, not the regular trash container. Do not recap used needles; put them in the puncture-proof container without the cap on.
- Trash that is contaminated with germs, such as wound dressings, should be disposed of according to your facility's procedures.
- Any container marked "Biohazard" is only for discarding contaminated waste; don't remove anything from it. If you must handle anything in the container, always use gloves. Don't put your hand in anything that contains needles or other sharp objects.
- Check your gloves and other protective clothing frequently. If you see tears or holes, remove the gloves, wash your hands, and apply clean gloves.
- Treat all linen soiled with blood or body secretions as potentially infectious.
- Surfaces that have been contaminated with blood or body fluids should be cleaned with a disinfectant according to your organization's policies.

**Tip:** Don't touch your nose, mouth, or eyes when giving resident care, unless you remove your gloves and wash your hands first. Protect yourself from infection.

### Disease transmission

Diseases can be spread in four ways:

- **Airborne transmission.** Airborne germs can travel long distances through the air and can be breathed in by other people.

Examples of diseases caused by airborne germs include tuberculosis and chickenpox.

- **Bloodborne transmission.** This occurs when the blood of an infected person comes in contact with the bloodstream of another person, which allows germs from the infected person into the other person's bloodstream. Blood and bloodborne germs are sometimes present in other body fluids, such as urine, feces, saliva, and vomit. Examples of diseases caused by bloodborne germs include AIDS and hepatitis.
- **Contact transmission.** Touching certain germs can cause the spread of disease. Direct contact with the germ involves touching an infected person. Touching an object that has been handled by an infected person is considered indirect contact with the infection. Examples of diseases caused by contact with germs include conjunctivitis, scabies, wound infections, and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- **Droplet transmission.** Some germs can travel only short distances through the air, usually not more than 3 ft. Sneezing, coughing, and talking can spread these germs. Examples of diseases caused by droplet germs include influenza and pneumonia. ■

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*Illustration by  
David Harbaugh*



*"I forgot all about a resident and staff immunization program, and CMS will be here this afternoon to ask a lot of questions, so I'm putting you in charge. And try to relax your hair."*

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**INFECTION CONTROL**

*Mark the correct response.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. When washing your hands, always use scalding hot water because that will kill all germs.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Use standard precautions when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. a resident appears to be sick
  - b. providing any resident care
  - c. you are sick
  - d. you know the resident has AIDS or hepatitis
3. When disposing of a needle or other sharp object, always \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. place it carefully in a biohazard puncture-proof container without touching the sharp end
  - b. recap it very carefully
  - c. leave it alone and tell your supervisor
4. When changing a bed or handling linens, the correct standard precaution procedure is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. shake out the linens to remove any objects or dirt
  - b. place the used linens on the floor or a table
  - c. wash linens soiled with body fluids separately from other laundry
  - d. roll up the dirty linens and hold them away from you until they can be placed in a laundry bag
5. If a resident has an infected wound, use the following additional precaution:
  - a. The standard precautions are good enough
  - b. Wear a gown, gloves, mask, and goggles while in the resident's room
6. Germs thrive on what type of surface?
  - a. Moist
  - b. Dry
  - c. Cracked
  - d. Granite
7. List the four types of disease transmission:
 

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
8. Standard precautions are designed to reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms from recognized and unrecognized sources of infection in healthcare settings.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. Standard precautions only protect against airborne diseases. For bloodborne, contact, and droplet transmission, additional precautions must be used.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Airborne germs, such as tuberculosis, can travel long distances through the air.
  - a. True
  - b. False