

Isolation Precautions for Adult Patients

What are isolation precautions?

These are safety measures used to lessen the spread of germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi) in the hospital. You may be placed in these precautions if we think you have an infection that can be spread to others. You may also need these if you carry certain types of germs, even if they are not making you ill. This is because these germs can cause serious infections for some patients. Try to avoid other patients.

Who decides if I need to be in isolation precautions?

The doctor or nurse caring for you or an infection control practitioner (ICP) will decide. You may be placed in these before we have test results if you have signs of an illness or have had an illness that is spread from person to person. This is based on Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

Will I need to have an isolation sign posted on the door?

Yes, this sign will be posted on your door so that health care workers, family, and friends know what steps they must take to prevent the spread of germs. This sign does **not** list your name and does **not** list what germ or infection you have. It only lists the safety measures that must be taken when people enter your room.

What precautions are taken?

Hand hygiene must be done by you and all people when they go in and out of your room. This means cleaning hands for 15 seconds with soap and water or alcohol hand gel. Soap and water should be used when hands look dirty and when the sign on your

door lists soap and water only for cleaning hands.

Contact precautions are used when an illness can be spread by touching you or objects that have touched you. Staff and visitors will use a gown and gloves when they enter your room.

Enhanced contact precautions are used when an illness can be spread by touching you or objects that have touched you. These germs are hard to kill on hands and surfaces. Staff and visitors will use a gown and gloves when they enter your room. Hands are cleaned with soap and water. This is because these germs are not killed with alcohol gel. Soap and water will be used for hand washing after caring for you and before leaving the room.

Droplet precautions are used when an illness is spread in mucus or saliva from the nose and mouth by coughing, sneezing, talking, or some procedures. Staff and visitors will wear a mask in your room. You may be asked to wear a mask if you must leave your room. If you can not wear a mask when outside your room, you should cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Clean your hands afterwards.

Airborne precautions are used when an illness is spread in the air. You will be in a room that allows air to flow into it rather than out of it. This helps to stop the spread of germs through the air. The door must stay closed for proper air flow. Staff and visitors will wear a mask called a respirator in your room. You may be asked to wear a mask if you must leave your room. If you can not wear a mask when outside your room, you

should cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Clean your hands afterwards.

More than one of these precautions may be used together to prevent the spread of germs.

How can I help to prevent the spread of germs?

1. Talk with your nurse about what you need to do to prevent the spread of germs.
2. Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing. If you use a tissue or your hands, clean your hands when you are done.
3. Clean your hands often and **always** after using the restroom, before eating, before leaving your room and when you return. If you need help cleaning your hands, ask your healthcare worker.
4. If you are in Contact or Enhanced Contact Precautions,
 - Bathe daily and change into clean clothing. If you can not bathe yourself, staff will help you.
 - Put on a clean robe (may use a second gown worn like a robe) before leaving your room. Keep the robe on while outside your room.
5. If you are in Droplet or Airborne Precautions,
 - Put on a snugly fitting mask before leaving your room. Keep the mask on at all times while you are outside of your room.
 - Stay in your room except when you need to go for a test or procedure.

Can my door be left open?

Your door will need to be closed if you are in Airborne Precautions. Your nursing staff will let you know if your door may be open or should be shut. If you have any questions, please ask.

Can I leave the room?

You rarely will leave your room. If you need to leave your room for tests, your nurse will tell you about the safety measures you need to take to avoid spreading germs to others. You may need to wear a mask or gown.

Are my family and friends allowed to visit?

Friends and family members should not visit if they have any signs of an illness that can be spread from person to person. These signs include a cough, sore throat, fever, rash, or diarrhea.

In most cases, you can have visitors. They will have to follow the same precautions as the health care workers. This means hand hygiene putting on gowns, gloves, and/or masks when they enter your room.

When can isolation precautions end?

Your doctor or an ICP will decide when these are no longer needed. Some patients need to be in isolation precautions during their entire stay. Even if these end, hand hygiene must still be done by all people when they go in and out of your room. This is to lessen the spread of germs.

What about when I go home?

We will tell you if you need to take any special precautions at home. Some of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs are cleaning your hands, covering your cough with your sleeve or a tissue, and routine cleaning of surfaces that are touched often.

If your doctor, nurse or an ICP tell you that you still need to take special precautions at home, please tell all hospital staff this if you return for clinic visits or more time in the hospital. You may need to be placed in isolation precautions again. This is to protect you, staff, and other patients.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 2/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6980.