

Look for Isolation Precaution Signs Before Entering Patient Rooms

We're getting **questions about "isolation precautions" in hospitals**...now that flu season is in full swing.

These measures help prevent the spread of infection.

Be familiar with the different kinds of isolation precautions...and what garb you're required to wear. Precautions are assigned based on how a particular infection is transmitted.

Contact isolation is for infections spread by touching a patient or objects around them...such as infectious diarrhea or MRSA.

Wear gloves and a gown when entering these rooms.

Droplet isolation is for infections spread when a patient who's a few feet away coughs or sneezes...such as flu or whooping cough.

Wear a surgical mask when entering these rooms.

Airborne isolation is for infections that can be carried through the air after a patient coughs or sneezes...such as chickenpox or tuberculosis. The particles are small and can travel farther than droplets.

Wear a special fit-tested mask when entering these rooms.

Look for signs posted outside patient rooms to tell you if there are isolation precautions and what type. Follow hospital policy on entering isolation rooms to take med histories, deliver meds to bedside, etc.

Check with a nurse if you need to find garb on patient care units.

When donning garb or removing it, follow the proper order.

Put ON your gown, then mask, then gloves. Take OFF your gloves, then gown, then mask. And discard garb right before exiting patient rooms.

Assume any med that's been in the vicinity of any patient is contaminated...you may not know if it came from someone in isolation.

For example, if USED meds (inhalers, vials, etc) are returned to pharmacy for disposal, wear gloves when handling them...and perform hand hygiene afterward.

Do your part to prevent the spread of infection...such as by getting a flu shot if you haven't already. It's required for all hospital staff by agencies such as Joint Commission.

And use proper hand hygiene for ALL patient contact...as a standard precaution.

Get our CE, *Hand Hygiene for Infection Control*, for more on preventing hospital-acquired infections.

Key References:

[http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-basics/how-to-be-a-good-visitor/what-are-isolation-precautions/\(11-17-16\)](http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-basics/how-to-be-a-good-visitor/what-are-isolation-precautions/(11-17-16)). www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/isolation/Isolation2007.pdf (11-17-16).

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