

Contact Precautions

Contact precautions are guidelines around caring for a person who has a disease that can be spread by contact with the patient (skin-to-skin contact or contact with bodily fluids, such as saliva, stool, blood, and fluid from open wounds) or the patient's environment. Examples of diseases spread by contact with the patient or the patient's environment include methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE), *Clostridioides difficile*, or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Following these guidelines helps to prevent the disease from spreading to others.

Guidelines for patients

If you have a disease that can be spread by skin-to-skin contact or by contact with bodily fluids or items within the environment, follow these guidelines during your stay in the hospital:

- Check with your nurse before you leave the room where you are being treated.
- Wear a gown and a bandage/covering (*dressing*) over the infected area if you need to leave your room.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Guidelines for visitors

If you are visiting a person who has a disease that can be spread by direct contact with the person, or through his or her environment, follow these guidelines:

- Check with a nurse before you enter a room that has a sign that says "Contact Precautions."
- If a nurse says that you can go in the room, you will be asked to:
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Wear a gown and gloves.
- **Do not** take off your gown or gloves in the room until you are about to leave.
- **Do not** eat or drink in the room unless you ask a nurse first.
- **Do not** touch anything in the room unless you ask a nurse first.
- Right before you leave the room:
 1. Take off your gloves first. Be careful not to touch the outside.
 2. Take off your gown. Be careful not to touch the outside.
 3. Leave your gloves and gown in the room as told by the nurse.
 4. Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Summary

- Contact precautions are guidelines to prevent the spread of diseases through direct contact with a person's skin or bodily fluids or items within the person's environment.
- If you are a patient, wear a gown in your room. Wear a bandage over the infected area if you need to leave the room. Ask a nurse before you leave your room.
- If you are a visitor, wear a gown and gloves. **Do not** touch anything in the room. **Do not** eat or drink in the room.
- For both patients and visitors, washing hands often with soap and water is the best way to prevent infection. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.