

Standard Precautions

A guide for healthcare workers

The basics of IPC

- Infection prevention and control involves implementing work practices that reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents through a two-tiered approach:
- Standard Precautions – used when caring for all patients, regardless of the patient’s perceived or actual infectious status; and/or when handling blood and/or all other body substances, secretions and excretions (excluding sweat), or non-intact skin or mucous membranes.
- Transmission Based Precautions – used in addition to standard precautions when managing patients suspected or known to be infected with particular agents transmitted by the contact, droplet or airborne routes.

Standard precautions include:

1. Hand Hygiene
2. Personal protective equipment (PPE)
3. Sharps management
4. Environmental cleaning
5. Reprocessing of reusable equipment
6. Respiratory hygiene
7. Aseptic Technique
8. Waste management
9. Linen management

Hand hygiene

- Hand hygiene is the single most effective intervention to reduce the risk of hospital-associated infections.
- Perform hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand rub or liquid soap and water.
- Perform hand hygiene as per the ‘5 moments for hand hygiene’:
 1. Before touching a patient
 2. Before a procedure
 3. After a procedure or body fluid exposure risk
 4. After touching a patient
 5. After touching a patient’s surroundings

PPE

- Wear appropriate PPE when you anticipate contact with blood and/or body fluids.
- PPE includes gloves, fluid resistant gowns and/or aprons, eye protection/face shields and surgical masks.
- PPE must be changed between patients and/or when soiled.

Sharps management

- Handle sharps safely during and after procedures, when cleaning used instruments and during disposal of used sharps.
- Do not recap, bend or break used needles after use.

- The person who has used a sharp is responsible for its safe disposal.
- Discard used disposable sharps at the point of use into an approved sharps container.

Environmental cleaning

- Follow local environmental cleaning protocols for guidance on cleaning and disinfecting, which should include cleaning schedules, cleaning equipment, cleaning and disinfecting products, cleaning practices and education.

Reprocessing of reusable equipment

- Reusable medical devices, instruments and patient care equipment should be reprocessed according to their intended use and manufacturer's advice.
- Do not reprocess items marked for single use.

Respiratory hygiene

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, preferably with a tissue but if you don't have a tissue handy, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper arm.
- Perform hand hygiene after coughing, sneezing, or using a tissue.
- Educate patients/clients/residents and visitors on respiratory hygiene when necessary.

Aseptic technique

- Use aseptic technique to prevent micro-organisms being introduced into a susceptible site by hands, equipment, and the environment.

Waste management

- Segregate waste at the point of generation and contain it into the appropriate colour coded receptacle.

Linen management

- Store clean linen in a protected space so that it is not contaminated by the environment prior to use (e.g. linen trolley cover).
- Handle used linen in a way that will prevent microorganism dispersal.
- Wear PPE as required when handling soiled linen.

Further resources

The *Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care* have resources available regarding the implementation of Standard Precautions, please visit the following webpage for access to posters, guides & signage: [Standard and transmission-based precautions posters | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/standard-precautions).

For more detailed information, please refer to the [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-guidelines-for-the-prevention-and-control-of-infection-in-healthcare). Refer to section 3.1 for information regarding standard precautions.

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www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/infection-prevention-and-control

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