

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU, CONNECTICUT.

Remind your patients, their families, (and your colleagues):

The most important thing you and your patients can do to prevent infection: wash hands with soap and use hand sanitizers.

It's the most well-known, least expensive, most efficient way to reduce the spread of infection, and yet recent studies show in some cases only half of Americans wash their hands before leaving a public restroom. It's about more than cleaning your hands: nail beds are a common host for organisms, particularly for people with acrylic nails.

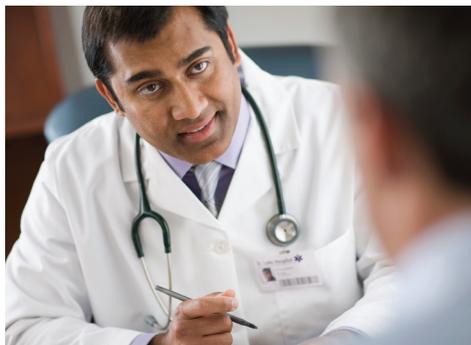
Teach respiratory etiquette, practice respiratory etiquette, and ask your colleagues to do the same.

The average sneeze propels about 5,000 bacteria or virus-filled droplets into the air. Remind patients that coughing and sneezing into their hands transfers those germs to everything they touch, even if they use a tissue. Turn away from others and sneeze or cough into your sleeve.

Remind patients to finish the entire course of antibiotics, even if they feel better.

Explain to your patients that it's a good sign if they feel better after just a few days; it means the antibiotic is working. But if they don't finish the entire course, they can become a host to drug-resistant organisms. These organisms can make them and others sick, and these new organisms, or super bugs, may be resistant to the drug they were prescribed.

Some patients will save antibiotics or share them with others because they don't understand that different bacteria respond to different medicines. Ask your patients if they are still taking their medicine and remind them why it's important. Some people need reassurance that they should continue taking their medicine even if they feel better. Remind them that if they have questions or want to stop taking their prescription early, they should always check with their doctor first.



Encourage self-advocacy, and enlist the help of friends and family members when possible.

The best healthcare is a working partnership between providers, patients, and their families. Encourage your patients to bring someone along with them to doctor appointment so they can take notes or ask follow-up questions. It's also ok for them to ask for privacy from family and friends while they recover. Remind visitors to sit on a chair instead of the bed, to wash their hands carefully before and after touching the patient, and to refrain from visiting if they are not feeling well.

Don't forget to review pre-surgical instructions and discuss specific circumstances.

Have you discussed the issue of shaving or hair removal prior to surgery? Does the patient understand why he or she is washing with a specific type of antibacterial soap? Are there any allergies? Remind the patient to read through the instructions ahead of time, and to call if he or she has any questions.

Check your vaccination status, and review your patient's vaccine history.

Vaccines can protect you, your patients, and your loved ones from serious illnesses. Make sure your patients and everyone in your own household — children and adults — are current.

A final note: Even under the best of circumstances, most people only remember about 10% of what they hear. Don't be afraid to repeat information, even if you know your patients have heard it before.

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