

home

YOUR AT-HOME CARE GUIDE

infection prevention tips

Northern Illinois Hospice is first in supporting you with the resources you need to ensure the best care. This is one in our series of tip sheets on how to improve safety and well-being in the home environment.

These standard precautions should be used around all hospice patients, regardless of if they are known to have an infectious disease. Before any symptoms appear, a patient who has an infection can be contagious, so it is best not to take any chances. Hospice patients usually have a decreased ability to resist infections, so these precautions also help protect them.

1. Hand Washing

Washing hands is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections. Wash before and after handling the patient, before handling or preparing food, and when hands are obviously soiled. Wash hands whether or not you have worn gloves.

2. Barrier Precautions

Wear gloves if you will likely be touching body fluids or mucous membranes (for example, when providing mouth care, bathing or wound care). Let hospice staff know if you have a latex glove allergy and we can help determine an alternative. Additionally, wear a gown or apron when clothing is likely to be soiled and mask/goggles if splashing is likely.

3. Sharp Object Disposal

Place any sharp object (intact syringe/needle units, lancets, razors) in rigid plastic or metal containers with a secure lid. **DO NOT** bend, break or recap needles after injections. You can use a coffee can as a container, but the lid must be reinforced with heavy duty tape. **DO NOT** use glass or clear containers. **DO NOT** place sharp objects in any container that will be recycled. Make sure the container is kept out of reach of children. Container may then be placed in a regular trash receptacle.



First in *caring* for life's final months

4. Handling/Disposal of Used Supplies

Soiled bandages, disposable sheets, medical gloves and smaller items should be double-bagged and securely fastened before being placed in a garbage bag with other trash. Always wear gloves any time you are handling medical waste.

5. Cleaning Equipment

If you have a spill of potentially infectious material (such as blood), clean the area with an antibacterial cleaner or a household bleach solution. Mix one part bleach with 10 parts water and wipe up the spill. Bleach-water solution also may be used to clean any equipment that has become soiled. Spot test a small area first, as bleach will remove the color from fabrics and carpets.

6. Laundry

All laundry may be washed as you have done before. However, use hot water for any items soiled with potentially infectious material (blood or bodily fluids). **DO NOT** wash the rest of your family's clothes with soiled/contaminated clothing. Bleach in the water will add extra protection against infection, if the fabrics will tolerate bleach.