



Preventing Super Bug Infections

Content provided by Patient Comfort Systems

(ARA) - Each year more than a million patients in the United States develop infections caused by deadly super bugs that have developed resistance to the antibiotics normally used to treat them. The sources of these life-threatening super bug infections are from both hospitals and outpatient facilities. Now, patients can be proactive in their fights against super bugs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1.7 million people in the United States each year develop health care associated infections and more than 100,000 people die each year as a result of these infections.

The number of hospital patients stricken by an infection that can lead to gangrene, blood poisoning and even death increased by 200 percent between 2000 and 2005, according to the latest "News and Numbers" from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. This sharp upturn follows a 74 percent increase in the number of cases between 1993 and 2000.

"It's clear that hospital and health care professionals need to do more to prevent Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA, an antibiotic resistant staph infection, especially in radiology," says Dr. Peter Rothschild, founder of Patient Comfort Systems -- a company that strives to minimize the risk of biological contamination on patient exam pads. "While there are many things hospitals and diagnostic imaging centers can do, there are also many proactive steps patients can take to help protect themselves from healthcare acquired infections."

The CDC reports that the number one action for preventing hospital acquired super bug infections is better hand hygiene by medical staff, their patients and visitors.

The following are a few important tips to keep in mind visiting a clinic or hospital:

If you are scheduled for an MRI and you are immunosuppressed, have HIV/AIDS, a chronic disease, have any type of compromised immune system or are elderly you owe it to yourself to demand to see a hospital or clinic's infection control policy.

Visit the facility before your appointment to see their infection control. By the time you are lying on the table for your scan it is often too late.

Ask for the facility to fax or e-mail a copy of their infection control policy. If they are not willing to share it, it probably means they do not have one.

Wash your own hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Ask your health care provider to wash his or her hands and/or change their gloves prior to being examined.

Carry antibacterial wipes and wipe down wheelchairs, blood pressure cuffs, stethoscope diaphragms and the exam pad areas, or request that health care workers perform this simple sanitization before you are examined.

Pull back the white sheet, or paper, covering the pads in exam rooms. If the underlying pad is worn, torn or stained, ask for another exam room or new pads. Ask what the process is for disinfecting the pads and equipment you will contact. You can also carry a small portable black light to be used to check for biological contamination.

Ask for a report of infection rates from hospitals and clinics. Carefully choose a health care facility based upon its infection rates.

Five days prior to surgery, bathe each day with chlorhexidine soap, which is available without a prescription, to prevent dangerous bacteria from contaminating the skin. Ask that clippers be used instead of a razor to clear the surgical site. Razors can cause small nicks in the skin allowing bacteria to enter the body.

If an IV is required, make sure that the IV is inserted under sterile conditions. The skin area should be disinfected and the IV changed every three to four days. Also make sure that the person inserting or manipulating the IV washes his/her hands and wears sterile gloves.

Avoid touching your hands to your mouth and nose. Don't leave eating utensils lying by the bedside, and always disinfect your hands before and after eating or touching your face.

Ask your doctor to test you for the MRSA super bug bacteria at least one week prior to going into the hospital.

By taking these proactive steps you can considerably reduce the risk of exposure to these deadly super bug infections for you and your loved ones in any health care setting.

For more information about hospital acquired infections and prevention, visit www.PatientComfortSystems.com.

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