

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

## **Tips to Help Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections**

Infection prevention week is October 14-21

A Wyoming Department of Health representative is advising Wyoming consumers they can help prevent healthcare-associated infections (HAI) when they visit a medical facility.

HAIs are infections people can get while receiving treatment for other conditions.

“Infection prevention is everyone’s responsibility and clean hands are essential to preventing infection,” said Emily Thorp, infectious disease epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “Patients and visitors need clean hands and it is also okay to ask healthcare providers to clean their hands before touching you.”

“While most healthcare facilities have professionals who work hard to prevent the transmission of infections, there are additional things patients can do to protect themselves and their loved ones,” Thorp said.

Thorp recommended 10 steps for patients to help prevent healthcare-associated infections:

1. Speak up. Talk to doctors about your concerns and ask what they are doing to protect you
2. Keep hands clean. Remind healthcare providers, family and visitors to wash their hands.
3. Ask if you still need a catheter (central line or urinary). The chances of infection are increased if catheters are left in place longer than necessary.
4. Ask if new needles, syringes and medication vials are going to be used for your procedure or injection. Needles, syringes and medication vials should never be reused between patients.
5. Be careful with medications. Follow the exact directions for any prescribed medication and tell your doctor about other medicines you are taking to avoid harmful drug interactions.
6. Get smart about antibiotics. Take all your antibiotics as prescribed and do not share.
7. Prepare for surgery. Talk to your doctor about preparing yourself for surgery to prevent infection and bathe before arrival.
8. Watch out for C. diff. Important risk factors for infection with *Clostridium difficile* are prior healthcare exposure and antibiotic use. Tell your healthcare provider if you have severe diarrhea, especially if you are taking an antibiotic.
9. Know the signs and symptoms of infection. Redness, pain or drainage at IV catheter or surgical incision sites and a fever are classic signs. Tell your doctor if you have these symptoms.
10. Get your flu vaccine. Help protect yourself and loved ones against influenza.

For more information please visit [www.health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/HAIgeneral.html](http://www.health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/HAIgeneral.html) online.

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