Patient Safety and Infection Control

Infection control is one of the most effective ways to prevent germs from spreading and causing harm.

Your doctors, nurses and other caregivers are taking every measure to ensure your safety while you are here. Before treating you, and sometimes even during your treatments, they will be washing their hands or using an instant hand sanitizer in order to prevent spreading germs from other patients, objects they have touched, or from themselves. They may also wear special clothing to help prevent the spread of germs.

You also play an important role... When you are sick, you are especially vulnerable to germs because your body is fighting to regain its health from illness or surgery.

As a patient, here are some things you can do to help control and even eliminate germs from becoming a threat to your health.

1. **Assume that everyone you come in contact with has germs.**
   You can't see germs, so there's no way of knowing where they are or who might be carrying them.

2. **Clean your hands.**
   **KEEPING YOUR HANDS CLEAN IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO TO FIGHT GERMS.**
   Using soap and water, or an instant hand sanitizer, can help fight the germs that cause the common cold, the flu, or the spread of more serious disease forming bacteria.
   It is also important that family or friends who come to visit clean their hands, especially before coming in contact with you. The cleaner your environment remains, the better your chances for a speedy recovery.
   In fact, cleaning your hands should be a regular habit for everyone, in or out of the hospital. For your health and the health of others, clean your hands at the following times: BEFORE: eating; cooking; and handling food.
   AFTER: going to the bathroom; touching animals, including pets; coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose; cleaning the house; being outside; taking care of or visiting sick people; whenever hands look dirty; and, if you haven't washed your hands in a while.

3. **Avoid contact with body fluids.**
   There are many infections that can be spread by blood or other body fluids. Some of these illnesses, such as Hepatitis B and C, HIV and Syphilis, are spread by blood and can be quite dangerous, even life threatening. Other body fluids, such as urine, stool, vomit or saliva, can be a source of bacteria or other infectious agents, and may also cause serious infections.

   Fighting germs for your health and the health of others will help you be a better partner in your care.