



NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Urges North Dakotans to Learn How To Prevent Infections

BISMARCK, N.D. – In conjunction with National Infection Prevention Week Oct. 16 through 22, 2011, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging residents to learn about preventing infections in health-care settings.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of National Infection Prevention Week, first established in 1986. This year's theme, "Infection Prevention is Everyone's Business," encourages everyone to heighten awareness of the need to protect patients from healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). Everyone is encouraged to learn the **WAVE** to help stop the spread of infections: **W**ash or clean hands; **A**sk questions; **V**accinate against flu and pneumonia; and **E**nsure safety of medical equipment such as catheters.

"The health-care community has made substantial progress in preventing certain healthcare-associated infections, but we still have a long way to go," said Faye Salzer with the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Disease Control. "Patients and caregivers are a vital member of the health-care team. We encourage them to learn how to protect against infections and to discuss these steps with their health-care providers. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask for more information about your care."

The Department of Health offers these tips to help prevent healthcare-associated infections:

- Before receiving a shot, ask if the needle, vial and syringe have been newly opened.
- If you have not seen health-care staff who care for you either wash their hands or use alcohol hand rub, ask them to do so. This also applies to visitors.
- If you have a catheter in your bladder or vein, tell your nurse if it becomes loose or painful. Also, ask each day when it can be removed.
- If you are having surgery, ask your doctor if you should shower with an antiseptic soap before you are admitted.
- Ask your health-care provider if you need any shots or vaccines. Annual vaccination against influenza is recommended for all people age 6 months and older.

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- If you think that the area around you or the equipment in your room looks dirty, ask to have it cleaned.
- If you have a bandage (also called a “dressing”), let your nurse know if it gets wet, loose or feels uncomfortable.
- If you are diabetic, practice safe diabetes testing. Never share your blood sugar testing equipment with others, even close family and friends. This includes finger stick devices, blood glucose meters and insulin pens. Your best shot at safety is 1 needle, 1 syringe, 1 time only!
- WASH YOUR HANDS or use an alcohol-based hand rub often. This is one of the most important ways to prevent infection.

“Disease prevention is in your hands,” said Salzer. “Washing our hands is such an easy thing to do, that many people forget this important step. We need to remember to go back to the basics we were taught as children, and wash our hands often.”

Here are five easy steps to follow:

- Wet your hands and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces. Scrub 20 seconds (sing the ABCs).
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands.
- If possible, turn off the faucet with a paper towel.

If water is not available, apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to all surfaces of your hands until you are able to wash your hands.

For more information, contact Faye Salzer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.333.8389.

– 30 –

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